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Submitted to the Graduate Board

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A DEGREE ABOVE: A STUDY OF TRANSLATIONS OF QUR'ĀN 4:34; EXEGESIS ON IT, AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE GENDER POSITION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSLIM WOMEN

A Dissertation
Submitted To
The Temple University Graduate Board

---

in Partial Fulfillment
of The Requirements For The Degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

---

by
Constance Carter
May, 2003

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ABSTRACT

A DEGREE ABOVE: A STUDY OF TRANSLATIONS OF QUR'ĀN 4:34; EXEGESIS ON IT, AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE GENDER POSITION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSLIM WOMEN

By: Constance Carter

Doctor of Philosophy

Temple University, 2003

Major Advisor: Dr. Khalid Y. Blankinship

This dissertation is confined to an examination of the different understandings of Qur'ānic verse 4:34, and their relevance to the position of African American Muslim women in their private and public space. Muslim tradition tells us that this verse defines the division of labor, specifically of man and wife, and of men and women in general. And out of the more than 6,000 verses in the Qur'ān which give guidance for correct conduct for both males and females, 4:34 in conjunction with 2:228 has been translated and interpreted in such a way that some scholars hold that God has given men "a degree above women" hence, unquestionable superiority. This is the main reason why 4:34 is considered by many scholars as the pivotal verse which has caused the most tension and confusion in reference to the gender position of Muslim women. Hence, interest in this verse is great, and the crucial issue surrounding this study deals with the problem of translation and interpretation of this verse. This work concentrates on analyzing only English translations of the sacred text, primarily because many African American Muslim women depend on them for religious guidance. This study includes an annotated bibliography, describing factors which have influenced translations of this

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verse, including the various translators' dogmatic presuppositions, approaches to the Qur'ān and quality of translation. In addition, I have depended on a study of Qur'ānic exegesis on verse 4:34 to clarify the traditional reception of this verse and to relate that reception to its reception by African American Muslim women.

The main problem for some contemporary women scholars who have researched this verse is the male manipulation of the Qur'ān itself, a manipulation that restricts women more than warranted by the text. The locus of this manipulation is the Qur'ānic exegesis *(tafsīr)* by both medieval and modern exegetes, who have set the foundation for patriarchal politics. Such a tendency especially characterizes the exegesis of verse 4:34, an exegesis that definitely marginalizes Muslim women. Some feminist scholars have even referred to this manipulation of verse 4:34 as "exegetical violence." According to these scholars, based on their readings of *tafsīr* concerning 4:34, and their encounters with exegetically- informed gender roles and of Muslim relations, women will never be able to achieve equality with men! However, my primary focus is more concerned with examining the range of English translations with the support of the science of *tafsīr* by early scholars in order to find the best or most appropriate translation, one, which conveys a comprehensible meaning to the reader. My first basic assumption surrounding the misunderstanding is that the problems are associated with English translation, and not with the exegesis of the verse. For it is my understanding, which this whole thesis is based upon, that English translations do not convey a comprehensible meaning to the reader. It is also an assumption that it is *tafsīr* that brings out the vital content to the translated verses, and helps the reader to understand

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the intended meaning of Allah's revelations. The study as a whole does not argue the question of women's empowerment or disempowerment in classical exegesis, but rather concentrates on providing exegetical analysis of the work of both medieval and modern Muslim scholars, in order to find the most appropriate explanation of this verse. My final argument in this thesis is based on the assumption that African American Muslim women who read English translations will make sense of this verse by seeking the proper interpretation and exegesis of this verse from qualified Muslim teachers or sources. For them, this is their Islamic obligation, which it is necessary for them to fulfill, so that the application of this verse will, first and foremost, be pleasing to their Lord.

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All gratitude is due first to God, for without His guidance, this work would not exist. I am grateful to Temple University's Religion Department, faculty and staff. I would especially like to thank both Dr. Khalid Blankinship, my advisor, and Dr. Mahmoud Ayoub, member of my committee and mentor, for their unwavering support, encouragement, kindness, instruction, direction and supervision during my entire graduate experience. I appreciate Dr. Katie G. Cannon's advice during the time she served on my committee. Special thanks to Dr. Amina Wadud of Virginia Commonwealth University and Dr. James Kelch, Temple University, for their willingness to serve as committee members both on short notice and in spite of their tremendously busy schedules. And to Dr. Lucy Bregman, Acting Chair, Religion Department – I truly appreciate her sincere guidance and intervention.

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I would not have survived the technical end of my work without the talent, skills, expertise and overall support of, Muneerah Muhammad Saunders, Jana Mott, Maryam Abdul Hakim, Su Arra Sulayman, Taifa Naeem, Zakiyyah Muhammad and Hadiyah Abdus Saboor.

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Finally, to my loving and kind husband, Jamil Abdus Sabur, whose support exceeded far beyond my expectations. For his generosity, for his *sabr* (fortitude, forbearance, courage and patience) and for his wisdom, I am forever grateful. He is truly my *qawwām*, (protector, maintainer and provider.)

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine how the translation and exegesis of Qur'ān 4:34 influences the gender position of African American Muslim women. Therefore, I am very interested in finding out how these women read, interpret, and apply this verse in real life situations: The verse reads for example, as follows in The Meaning of The Glorious Qur'ān, translated by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall:

> Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever High, Exalted, Great. [1]

Almost all translators interpret the verse in question in relation with Qur'ān 2:228, which reads in part, "...and men have a degree over them," to mean the superiority of men to women. 'Abd al-'Āṭī author of The Family Structure in Islam, explains in his exegesis of this verse, that such an interpretation has provided the textual basis for the obedience of the Muslim wife to her husband and his authority and power over her.[2] My contention is that most existing English translations do not convey the fullest meanings of the sacred text in its original language. Further I intend to show in this study that it is only with the support of *tafsīr*, that one can provide a complete translation and explanation of the Arabic meaning of Qur'ān 4:34.

In order to accomplish the objective of this study, it has been necessary to divide this work into two major projects. The first project deals with researching and

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analyzing theoretical claims and concepts which address the complexities and controversies surrounding the translation and interpretation of the Qur'ān. Specifically, this phase focuses entirely on examining the range of English translations with the support of classical exegesis, in order to find the most comprehensive translation and explanation of verse 4:34. Although this work is not arguing for women's empowerment or disempowerment in classical exegesis, but rather concentrating on providing exegetical analysis, the results of my findings do include whether the maximum rights of women as revealed in the original text and its exegesis have been limited by way of interpretations found in English translations and commentaries. In addition, I have been able to draw some conclusions about whether or not these translations reflect the Muslim principles of justice and equity for both males and females, which are contained within the integral whole of the meaning of the Qur'ān.

The second project represents the Islamic practices of African American Muslim women in their private and public life, based on their readings of the English translation of 4:34. This is the most critical part of my study, because it investigates the impact and influences that the Qur'ān and its translation and exegesis have on the real life situations of African American Muslim women. I was able to do this investigation through field research. My fieldwork has allowed me the opportunity to observe the *adab* (etiquette, conduct) of Islamic families and the development of gender identities as they relate to the translation and exegesis of this verse. Many scholars infer that Muslim women in both the family and public life occupy an inferior position to Muslim men, mainly based on that one controversial verse. My field research has helped me to

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discover how African American Muslim women feel about the scholarly work, which is being published about them as it relates to 4:34. Therefore, I hold that my work is significant in that these women have through it an opportunity to speak openly and honestly about their own life experiences. Furthermore, it has helped me to gain invaluable insight about their experiences as they relate to this verse. Most importantly, field research has allowed me to give a true account of how these women understand the gender roles of men and women. I have been able to discover the guidelines that both Muslim men and women live by, based on their understanding of what is the "acceptable family structure" in Islam. The role that each individual's interpretation of 4:34 contributes to his or her gender-relational paradigm has been explored. As a result, I have been able to contrast the paradigms and life experiences of individuals who include God as the ultimate governor of gender-relations vs. those who accept a more patriarchal view of gender roles.

Methodology and Sources

Since this dissertation deals with both theory and practice, it is divided into two major parts. The first part focuses on concepts and theoretical studies of the interpretation, translation, and exegesis of certain Qur'ānic verses. My methodology is based on library research for this phase. I did a critical review of 15 translations, including the most popular English translations of verse 4:34 used by African American Muslim women, to determine if they render an intelligible meaning in reference to the purpose of the verse. I studied the translators' interpretive methods and processes. I researched problems with English translations such as the difficulty in translating

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Arabic words to English, omission and distortion of difficult Arabic words, and intentional and unintentional exegetical expansions of the text. I considered the exegetical roles and commentaries in English in those works equipped with them. Finally, I attempted some assessment of the semantic and rhetorical qualities of the English translations. I included an annotated bibliography of each translator so that the reader will be aware of the author's background and his or her theological or philosophical persuasion, which will help the reader to determine the quality of translation. Further, I investigated verse 4:34 by studying Qur'ānic *tafsīrs* of the classical Muslim exegetes through the early centuries. An exploration of the historical, religious, and secular environments of each classical exegete was employed. I examined the political environments in which they lived and the special characteristics of their traditional exegesis (*tafsīr*). In addition I analyzed these traditional *tafsīrs* in the light of traditional exegetical methodology. The traditional methods included analyzing the original source, which is the Qur'ān, the authentic *aḥādīth* (practices and traditions of the Prophet), and the works of early companions and their immediate successors. Finally, modern works by both Muslim and non-Muslims were explored.

Since the second part of this study deals with the observation of indigenous Muslim women's experiences and practices as they relate to their understanding of 4:34, the primary method employed was field research, by way of informal interviews. My field research took place within the Philadelphia Muslim community, where I conducted twenty-five in-depth interviews with Sunni Muslim women who are, or have been connected to the Addeynu-Allahe Universal Institute, The Quba Institute of Arabic and

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Islamic Studies, and the Dār ul-Islam movement. Interviews took place in both their homes and in the mosques (*masjids*). My interview questions concentrate on how Muslims read, interpret, understand, and apply the injunction from verse 4:34 in both their family lives and with society. Married women were asked open-ended questions pertaining to their roles as wives and mothers and as "individuals." Their interaction with their husbands, children, and family members was observed in the context of their negotiation of rights and responsibilities. Single women were asked open-ended questions about the relevancy of this verse to them in their daily lives. Overall, I have observed women's experiences in both their private and public space. The information has been collected in audio and written formats. This qualitative data from the interviews will be used to address their understanding of 4:34 and its impact on their concept of the Islamic family in America.

In order to examine the ways that African American Muslim women balance, mediate, and resist conflict, I addressed Patricia Hill Collins's theory on the matrix of domination as found in her book, Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and Politics of Empowerment. This theory holds that black women know how to resist oppression by ways that are empowering. Collins claims in her work that black women have capacities for self-definition, determination, and valuation that allow them to mediate and resist oppression. Her work helps to demonstrate those advantages that Muslim women of African American descent bring with them when they enter into the fold of Islam.

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Proper Arabic and Muslim names are written with diacritics. Arabic terms are italicized, given in parentheses following their English equivalences. Transliteration rules of the Islamic program in Religion at Temple University are followed in this study. These rules emphasize transliterating words as they are written, not as they are pronounced.

Translations

The translation of Qur'ānic verses, specifically verse 4:34, are taken from the following translations of the meaning of the Qur'ān, which are given in their chronological order of appearance:

1. Alexander Ross. The Alcoran of Mahomet Translated Out of Aribique into French, by Sieur Du-Ryer.
2. George Sale. The Koran or Commonly called Alcoran of Muhammad.
3. J.M. Rodwell. The Koran.
4. E.H. Palmer. The Glorious Koran.
5. N.J. Dawood. The Koran.
6. Muhammad Ali. The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary.
7. Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall. The Meaning of the Glorious Koran.
8. Abdullah Yusuf Ali. The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary.
9. Khadim Rahmani Nuri. The Running Commentary of the Holy Qur'ān.
10. Abul A'la Maududi. The Meaning of the Qur'ān.
11. Muhammad Asad. The Message Of the Qur'ān.
12. Taqi-Ud-Din Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan. Interpretation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur'ān.
13. Mohammad Ashfaq Ahmad. The Noble Qur'ān.
14. Amatul Rahman and Abdul Mannan Omar. The Holy Qur'ān.

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15. Abdul Haqq and Aisha Bewley. The Noble Qur'ān: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English.

The Plan

This dissertation has six chapters. Chapter One begins this work by presenting a general study of translation in case of the Qur'ān. Specifically, this chapter gives an overview of some of the critical problems surrounding English translations and interpretations of the Qur'ān. It briefly explores the validity of the predominant view held by some early Muslims that it is impermissible to translate the Qur'ān. The question of untranslatability of the Qur'ān is addressed in more detail. Khadiga Karrar El Shaik El Tayeb, author of "Principles and Problems of Scriptures: The Case of the Qur'ān", has done outstanding research in this area. Consequently, her work is used as the primary source in this section. I also relied on her work as a guide to determine what constitute good English translations.

Chapter Two demonstrates the significance of the science of *tafsīr*. The historical development of this science is discussed, along the role of *ḥadīth*, and the contributions of Muslim women to both *aḥādīth* and *tafsīr*. The main objective of this section focuses on the impact of exegetical interpretive methods on the concept of gendered woman in Qur'ānic verses.

Chapter Three will begin the analysis of classical *tafsīr*. It will address some of the complexities and tensions concerning its use. This chapter will also contrast modern feminist methodology versus traditional Islamic methodology used to analyze *tafsīr*.

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Chapter Four will complete the investigation of classical *tafsīr* by analyzing the exegesis of Qur'ān 4:34 in its original language. This chapter intends to inform the reader whether or not *tafsīr* brings clarity or ambiguity to translations. It also discusses *tafsīr's* influence on what is translated or not translated in the English translated texts that indigenous Muslim women read and depend on for guidance.

In Chapter Five, I have examined different English translations of 4:34 in order to analyze the translators' interpretive methods as they relate to rendering the most appropriate translation. Overall, I have discussed the complexities surrounding English translations appearing without any Qur'ānic exegesis of the text.

Chapter Six will focus on the most crucial part of my work, because it is based on the voice of the Muslim woman herself speaking about her understanding of the English translation of the meaning of Qur'ān 4:34. The African American woman addresses the concept of the "oppressed Muslim woman" and shares intimate truths about what she considers constraints on her individual freedom. The relevancy of contemporary gender issues is addressed in the context of whether this woman believes she is empowered or disempowered based on her reading and understanding of verse 4:34. She also discusses whether this verse, in her practical application, is compatible with the exegesis of the early scholars. A demographic analysis of the Muslim woman's family composition and historical background is included in this chapter.

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Conclusions

In the final chapter I summarize the results of research, interviews, and findings on how Qur'ān 4:34 has influenced the gendered role of African American Muslim women. Recommendation for further studies is discussed as well.

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Endnotes - Introduction

[1] Pickthall, p.75.
[2] 'Abd al'Āṭī, The Family Structure in Islam. pp. 173,175,178.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE STUDY OF TRANSLATIONS: THE CASE OF THE QUR'ĀN:

The Problem of English Translations

> Translation is a major tool in cross cultural communication. Its scope becomes even wider when dealing with a text consisting of universals applicable to all addressees regardless of their racial and cultural backgrounds. In the case of such a text, in this case the Qur'ān, the study of translations extends beyond mere concern with linguistic substitution across languages. Broader questions regarding the quality and effectiveness of translations in communicating the message, as reflected in the reader's understanding and response have to be addressed. [1]

As the quote indicates, translation of the Qur'ān is not an easy task, for it is more than a literary exercise. Because of the Qur'ān's universal appeal to humanity, translations must be able to communicate the most appropriate meaning of the God spoken word in a way that a diversity of languages and cultures may comprehend. Yet, some scholars claim that it is impossible to translate the lyrical words, as well as convey the meaning of God's speech (*kalam*), as revealed in the Arabic tongue to His last Prophet. It is their position that it is difficult to find foreign words to reproduce the expressions, the spirit and conceptual symbolisms, and the inner meaning of the original word of God, which is contained in the Arabic language. It is also a known fact that with languages in general, when translated, something is lost in the translation. This is because no two languages are the same. It is impossible to translate literally an original language to a foreign language, and keep the same exact style, order, and arrangement of words that appear in the original language. The order in which words may appear may vary from one language to the other. Translations cannot fully capture the variety of

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meaning within the proper content and context of the original language into a foreign language.[2] Further, due to the unique characteristics of the classical Arabic language, translations from it are much more difficult than translations of other languages. For example, classical Arabic is characterized by "an extraordinary richness of vocabulary and its grammatical flexibility, and the logical, systematic character of its grammatical structure. The flexibility of Arabic grammar arises from its peculiar system of verbal roots and [the range of meanings that can be derived from these roots], its nuances, idioms and modes in which the idioms are conveyed."[3] Therefore, foreign words do not covey the exact meaning of a word in Arabic. Translation may restrict the meaning of an original Arabic word. Not only are Arabic words difficult to translate individually, but also so are the grammatical structures and rhetorical features as well. All of this inevitably leads to some distortion of the translated text.[4] To magnify this problem, some traditional Muslim scholars claim that when non-Muslims, as well as some Muslim translators, translate the Qur'ān into English by way of literal translation and interpretation, the translators have a tendency to force the words of the Qur'ān to yield meanings that will reflect their own ideologies, presuppositions, and biases, without taking into consideration information that is a part of the textual or scholarly tradition of Islam. In addition, one of the pitfalls of literalism is that it may cause the translation to deviate from the ethical doctrines and principles of justice and equity which are contained in the universal message and meaning of the Qur'ān. According to some Muslim conservatives, the truth of the Qur'ānic message has to be read, perceived and understood as it is, not as the translator would like it to be. [5]

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Another consideration in regard to translating the Qur'ān is that Muslims sincerely believe that the language of the Qur'ān is unique, in that God Himself preserved it in that language. It is their belief that God is the Keeper or bearer of the Qur'ān.

> We have without doubt,
> Sent down the Message;
> And We will assuredly
> Guard it (from corruption)" Q15:9 [6]

> No falsehood can approach it
> From before or behind it.
> It is sent down
> By One full of Wisdom
> Worthy of all Praise" Q41:42 [7]

> Nay, this is
> A Glorious Qur'ān
> (inscribed in)
> A Tablet Preserved) Q85:21-22 [8]

Based on the above evidence, Muslims aver the preservation of the Qur'ān with evidence from the Qur'ān itself.

The Qur'ān states that God's *kalam* or speech was revealed to His angel Jibril (Gabriel) who revealed it in Arabic precisely, letter by letter and word by word, to God's last Prophet. The passages read as cited below:

> Say: Whoever is an enemy
> To Gabriel-for he brings down
> The (revelation) to thy heart
> By Allah's will, a confirmation
> Of what went before,
> And a guidance and glad tidings
> For those who believe. Q2:97 [9]

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Move not thy tongue
Concerning the (Qur'ān)
To make haste therewith.
It is for Us to collect it
And to recite it:
But when We have
Recited it, follow thou
Its recital (as promulgated):
Nay more, it is
For Us to explain it
(And make clear): Q 75:16-19 [10]

A Messenger from Allah
Rehearsing scriptures.
Kept pure and holy;
Wherein are books.
Right and straight. Q 98:2-3 [11]

For Muslims, these verses substantiate that Muhammad was the exemplary bearer of the Qur'ān par excellence. God gave him the capacity to preserve the Qur'ān, God's word verbatim in his heart, and Muhammad kept the book pure without adulteration and distortion of the word of God. Additional evidence of the authority and authenticity of the oral preservation of the Qur'ān is found in various passages scattered through out the Qur'ān.

Based on these scriptures from the Qur'ān, it was God Himself, and His last Prophet, Muhammad who preserved the Qur'ān. All subsequent followers of Muhammad were charged with being keepers (*huffāẓ*, an Arabic term for those who memorize the entire Qur'ān) of the sacred text. They also preserved its original language, form, content (with the precise lettering, wording, and meaning) as it was revealed to Muhammad.[12] Because of the aforementioned evidence, the classical Arabic of the Qur'ān is of supreme importance as the religious language of the Muslims.

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Furthermore, it is only through utilization of the Qur'ānic Arabic language in their religious and ceremonial activities that the Muslims believe that they are able to perform proper worship of God. This language is also extremely important to Muslims because repeatedly in the Qur'ān, emphasis is laid on the fact that the Word of God has been revealed in the Arabic language. There are approximately eleven verses showing this point. Some of these verses read in part:

> We have sent it down
> As an Arabic Qur'ān
> In order that ye may
> Learn wisdom. Q 12:2 [13]

> Thus have We revealed it
> To be a judgment of authority
> In Arabic... Q13:37 [14]

> We know indeed that they
> Say, "It is a man that
> Teaches him." The tongue
> Of him they wickedly point to
> Is notably foreign, while this
> Is Arabic pure and clear. Q16:103 [15]

> Thus We have sent this
> Down-an Arabic Qur'ān-
> And explained therein in detail
> Some of the warnings,
> In order that they may
> Fear Allah, or that it may
> Cause their remembrance
> (of Him). Q 20:113 [16]

> A book whereof the verses
> Are explained in detail:-
> A Qur'ān in Arabic,
> For people who understand;- Q 41: 3[17]

> Had We sent this as
> A Qur'ān (in a language)

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Other than Arabic, they would
Have said: "Why are not
Its verse explained in detail?
What a foreign (tongue)
And (a messenger) an Arab?"
Say: "It is a guide
And a healing to those
Who believe;..." Q 41:44 [18]

Thus have We sent
By inspiration to thee
An Arabic Qur'ān:
That thou may warn... Q 42:7 [19]

We have made it
A Qur'ān in Arabic,
That ye may be able
To understand. Q 43:3 [20]

In addition, according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, author of Islamic Spirituality: Foundations, the Arabic of the Qur'ān is unique and important to Muslims because it was a "sonoral" revelation, in that the first words of the Qur'ān revealed by Gabriel to Muhammad surrounded the Prophet like an ocean of sound. This same sound of the Qur'ān penetrates the Muslim's body and soul even before it appeals to the mind. Nasr refers to this sacred quality as the psalmody of the Qur'ān.[21] With this thought in mind, the problem with translation of the Qur'ānic Arabic is magnified and complicated, because the language of the Qur'ān is the standard of eloquence in the Arabic language. It is this eloquence which gives the Qur'ānic Arabic the status of *i'jāz* (inimitability). Consequently, in some translations by Muslims is the claim that, "the Qur'ān is untranslatable and what the reader is reading is not the Qur'ān." [22] To elaborate on

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this, I will discuss the question of untranslatability and the impermissibility of the Qur'ān in more detail.

I'jāz: The Concept of Untranslatability and the Impermissibility of Translating the Qur'ān

As mentioned in the preceding section, some Muslim translators have claimed that the Qur'ān cannot be translated, and that it is impermissible (*haram*) to try to translate the sacred text. These predominant views have led to the current textual controversy over the translation and interpretation of the Qur'ān. Muslim tradition states that in regard to the concept of untranslatability, the Qur'ān is a miracle (*mu'jizah)* from God. Hence, Muslims see the Qur'ān as a miracle within itself, for the Qur'ān is still with us today in its original form without any adulteration, corruption or distortion. The Qur'ān will remain until God Himself calls humanity back to Him to account for their deeds. The Prophet stated that he left two things with humanity, the Book of God and his tradition (*Sunnah).* As long as you hold onto these two things you will never go astray.[23] The Qur'ān is the divine inspiration that God gave Muhammad, and his *Sunnah* is the explanation and embodiment of this divine revelation. In al-Bukhari, in a *ḥadīth* narrated by Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet said:

> [E]very prophet was given a miracle of which people believed, but what I have been given is divine inspiration which God has revealed to me. So I hope my followers will outnumber the followers of the other prophets on the day of resurrection. [24]

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Therefore, the Qur'ān is a miracle (*mu'jizah)* of Muhammad, and it holds the status of inimitability (*i'jāz).*

The literal definition of the term *i'jāz* is "a rendering incapable and powerless." Since the second half of the 3rd/9th century, *i'jāz* has been the technical term for the inimitability or uniqueness of the Qur'ān in content and form.[25] Although there are numerous descriptive definitions of the term *i'jāz*, after the 4th/10th century they do not show significant divergences.[26]

The most important source for the doctrine of *i'jāz* comes in the Qur'ān, which, because of its unique and miraculous nature (*i'jāz*) leaves its opponents incapable of meeting its challenge.[27] Evidence in the following verse illustrates how the Arabs could not attempt to imitate the Qur'ān.

> Say: if the whole
> Of mankind and Jinns
> Were to gather together
> To produce the like
> Of this Qur'ān, they
> Could not produce
> The like thereof
> Even if they backed each other
> With help and support. Q17:88 [28]

Nor could they produce even one or ten surahs (chapters) like the Qur'ān. The following verses all contain the same challenge that can not be met.

> And if you are in doubt
> As to what We have revealed
> From time to time to Our servants
> Then produce a Sura
> Like thereunto;
> And call your witnesses or helpers
> (If there are any) besides Allah
> If ye are truthful. Q 2:23[29]

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Or do they say
"He forged it?"
Say, "Bring then
A Sura like unto it
And call (to your aid)
Anyone you can
Besides Allah, if it be
Ye speak the truth!" Q 10:38 [30]

Or they may say, "He forged it"
Say, "Bring ye then ten Suras
Forged, like unto it, and call
(To your aid) whomsoever
Ye can, other than Allah!-
If ye speak the truth!" Q 11:13 [31]

These preceding Qur'ānic proof texts are also the main proof of the doctrine of *i'jāz*. Subsequently, based on evidence presented above, Muslim theologians unanimously agree that the Qur'ān is *mu'jiz* (inimitable).[32] However, some Muslim scholars have differed on what actually constitutes *i'jāz*. Some of the earliest views on *i'jāz* state that the most important thing which constitutes *i'jāz* is *balāghah* (eloquence). For example, early traditional scholars namely al-Khattabi (d.386/996), al-Baqillani (d.403/1012) and al-Jurjani (d.471/1080), all based their explanation on *i'jāz* on *balāghah* that deals with words, meaning and arrangement. However, al-Jurjani was the genius who established that *i'jāz* was not merely connected with the words but also their meaning and arrangement as well, with rhetorical devices. These early views influenced the opinions of later scholars who held that *i'jāz* deals with the unique relationship which the Qur'ān establishes between words and meaning, along with rhetorical and literary devices and their appropriateness to meaning. [33]

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Then there are a few scholars who view *i'jāz* from an esoteric standpoint. For instance one of our contemporary scholars, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in his book, Islamic Spirituality: Foundations, says the following:

> The language of the Qur'ān is the crystallization of the Divine Word in human language, which seems to be shattered by the "weight" of the revelation from on high. The supreme miracle of Islam is in fact, considered to be the eloquence (*balāghah*) of the Qur'ān, which is for the Muslim the prototype of language. This eloquence much debated and discussed by Muslim scholars over the ages, does not reside so much in the ordering of the words into powerful poetic utterance as in the degree of inspiration. [A]s a result, every sentence, every word, every letter scintillates with a spiritual presence, and are like lights congealed in tangible form. This presence is to be found in the written as well as the sonoral Qur'ān. [34]

Based on the discussion above, traditional and some modern scholars based their views regarding the untranslatability of the Qur'ān on the doctrine of imitability (*i'jāz).* Therefore *i'jāz* represents a basis of the concept of untranslatability. As well, the status of inimitability (*i'jāz)* which renders the Qur'ān untranslatable is also the basis for the early scholars to hold that it is impermissible (*haram)* to attempt to translate the Qur'ān.

In addition to *i'jāz,* there is the concept of "arabicity". Arab Muslims believe that one must have a profound knowledge of Arabic to understand the Qur'ān truly and fully. The evidence for "arabicity" as a basis for impermissibility of translation is found in several passages in the Qur'ān. I have cited three of the many references below:

> Had We revealed it
> To any of the non-Arabs,
> And had he recited it
> To them, they would not
> Have believed in it. Q 26:198-199 [35]

> (It is) a Qur'ān
> In Arabic, without any crookedness (therein):

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In order that they
May guard against evil. Q 39:28 [36]

We have made it a Qur'ān
In Arabic that ye may be able
To understand. Q 43:3 [37]

In fact, the predominant view was that the untranslatability of the Qur'ān and impermissibility of trying to translate it were concepts that were linked with one another and were always used interchangeably. In other words, due to the untranslatable features of the Qur'ān, it was prohibited to try to translate the Qur'ān into any foreign language. However, in El Tayeb's work, it can be seen that these terms are not synonymous. There are sharp differences between the legal issue of impermissibility, and the general problem of untranslatability. She holds that:

> Most translations of the Qur'ān carry the general statement that "the Qur'ān is untranslatable" without any explanation. This statement is mostly made with the reference to a background in which untranslatability was equated with impermissibility and accordingly explained in theological terms. Though the claim is legitimate, yet for the uniformed reader with a translated text in hand, it represents a paradoxical statement. Untranslatability as a general problem should not be addressed in theological terms. [38]

She holds that the concept of untranslatability should be based upon a close study and analysis of the specific features to be translated. However, it is impermissible, prohibited and impossible to translate the word of God, which is the Qur'ān, literally, because of *i'jāz*. Although the Qur'ān is *mu'jiz*, some jurists hold that it is possible and permissible to have a non-literal translation of the meaning of the Qur'ān which attempts to convey the meaning of God's word.[39] Some contemporary scholars hold that in case of translation of the Qur'ān, they refer to the translation as

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interpretive, rather than literal, because the translator must apply his or her own understanding. [40] They cannot claim that their translation covers all possible meanings of the word of God. Hence, in this case, translation becomes exegetical similar to *tafsīr* in the same language, but with different words.

Traditional Ijtihad on the Permissibility of Translating the Qur'ān

Historically speaking, neither the Qur'ān itself, nor the *Sunnah*, ever gave a legal or definitive statement *(nass)* on the permissibility or impermissibility of translating the Qur'ān. However, there is some evidence that it is permissible to translate the sacred text, based on certain verses in the Qur'ān itself and traditions of the Prophet which support these verses. I will only cite a few for this work. In the Qur'ān, Allah says that the Qur'ān is for all people, not just Arabs.

> And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a giver of glad tidings and a warner to all mankind, but most of men know not Q 34:28.[41]

It is also a reminder for all people as shown in the verse below.

> And no reward you ask of them
> (those who deny your Prophethood)
> for it, (the Qur'ān) is no less than
> a reminder and advice unto the *Alamin*
> (men and jinn). Q 6:90 [42]

In addition, the basic concepts spoken in the Qur'ān are universal ideas for all of humanity, not just for Arabic-speaking people. According to the Prophet's *Sunnah*, the Prophet himself stated he was a mercy for humankind, and so he propagated the message of the Qur'ān to all humans. The Prophet sent out letters with bilingual

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messengers to invite the non-Arab nations to the fold of Islam.[43] Furthermore, the early scholars of jurisprudence and their students used their personal reasoning (*ijtihad)* to reach some valid conclusions regarding the permissibility of translating the Qur'ān. The Sunni jurist Abu Hanifah believed that the Qur'ān should be translated because it deals with universal ideals which should be communicated to all of humanity. However, he dealt only with the content of the Qur'ān which related to the recitation to be used in prayer. Abu Hanifah believed if a non-Arab became Muslim and desired to pray, this person should be allowed to pray to Allah in his native language.[44] This permission was only for a limited period, until Arabic could be learned. However, the other three schools (Maliki, Shāfi'i, and Hanbali), prohibited the reading of translation in prayer and otherwise.[45] The problem of translating the Qur'ān continued to be addressed by Muslim scholars. In Europe, translations by non-Muslims began to be produced, during the Middle Ages. In the early twentieth century, the Egyptian Azhari 'alim, Muhammad Shakir (1866-1939), condemned the practice of translating the Qur'ān as heresy. He also prohibited recitation of translated prayer.[46] Shaikh Shakir's views have influenced modern works on the permissibility of translating the Qur'ān. Some of these works are briefly addressed below.

A modern scholar named al-Zurqānī states in his work titled Manāhil al'Irfān that the only permissible type of translation is the translation of the exegesis, al-*tarjama al-tafīsīriyyah.* This is considered as exegetical translation which means that a translator does not actually translate the text of the Qur'ān into another language but that he interprets the meanings of the Qur'ān by approximately rendering them into

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another language. Al- Zurqānī holds that exegesis can be translated because it lacks the elements of *i'jāz* or (inimitability) both in outward text (*lafz*) and rhetoric (*balāghah*). Exegesis can be translated because it does not contain all the meanings and objectives contained in the Qur'ān. Al-Zurqānī cited some advantages for translation of exegesis, which are:[47]

1. The exposition of the beauty and embellishment (*mahasīn*) of the Qur'ān for those Muslims who do not know Arabic. The translation of exegesis makes it easy for them to understand the Qur'ān and to enjoy and benefit from its content.

2. Since the translation of exegesis contains both the Qur'ān in its original language, and the exegesis in a foreign language, it fulfills a basic obligation that is the propagation of the message both in its original word and meaning. Al-Zurqānī maintains, however, that it is obligatory for non-Arab speaking Muslim to learn Arabic. Imam Shāfi'ī held this view as well.[48] Actually all the schools uphold this view even though it is impossible to implement in practice.

Two other modern scholars, al-Qattān and al-Nadwī agree with al-Zurqānī. However, al-Nadwī suggested that *tarjamat al-tafsīr* should be called *tarjamat ma'ani al Qur'ān al karim*, or the translation of the meaning of the Qur'ān. He defines it as the transference of the referential meaning of the verses (*madlul al-ayat*) into a foreign language within the translator's limited capacity, and without the conveyance of either the style or the entire meaning intended in the original. This type of translation is possible because the aspect of *i'jāz* is not involved. The translator is dealing not with the original, the Qur'ān, but with the product of a human being, the exegesis.[49] This type of translation has been widely used, and the thousands of books translated from one language into another testify to its practicality.

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Based on the aforementioned evidence, translation of the Qur'ān is permissible and possible, at least within the limits outlined. As proven in the preceding text, the message of the Qur'ān is universal and can be communicated through a variety of linguistic expressions among groups and individuals. In the Qur'ān, the variety of linguistic expression among groups and individuals is seen as one sign of God's omnipotence, along with the creation of the heaven and the earth. Therefore, I hold that the Qur'ān itself suggests that its own meaning(s) should be accessible to all humanity, regardless of their racial and cultural backgrounds. The following verse provides evidence of this.

> And among His signs
> is the creations of the heavens
> and earth and the variations
> in your language
> and your colours: verily
> In that are Signs
> For those who know Q 30:22 [50]

However, actual translations, meaning the replacement of Qur'ānic Arabic (God's Divine and unadulterated word) with equivalent foreign words, are not possible. As mentioned earlier in this text, due to *i'jāz* and the unique characteristics of Qur'ānic Arabic, translations cannot convey all the meanings and objectives that the Divine intended. Yet a successful translation, one that renders comprehensible meanings or expressions of the intended meanings of its text, is possible if it meets the following criterion:

> ...the transference of the text based on sound understanding of intended meaning(s) of the text, its relation to the original receptors and the response to it, into the target language with the view of providing the

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> necessary information in the introduction, subsidiary introductions and footnotes, that would enable the target readers to gain an understanding of the text and eventually respond to it. [51]

Furthermore, in successful translations, footnotes should be concise and dedicated to guiding the target readers who do not know Arabic so that they can gain a more complete understanding of the Qur'ān. Therefore, the explanation in the footnote should be based on generally accepted exegetical principles.[52] When you understand a translation in this way, the introduction becomes a tool for understanding a translation.

Moreover, *tafsīr* (exegesis) is an even greater tool for understanding the Qur'ān because unlike translations, *tafsīr* determines the meaning of the Qur'ān as explained by the exemplary reader (Prophet Muhammad) and understood by the receptors.[53] The following discussion will expound upon the significance of high quality introductions

Hermeneutical Analysis And The Significant Introduction

> Since the translation is not an exegesis, the proper setting for providing the target reader relevant information to guide them through the translated text is the introduction to the translation. [54]

This quote from El Tayeb's work on the problems of translating the Qur'ān, emphasizes the significance of the introduction to understanding or interpreting the verses in the sacred text. Indeed, the introduction, also referred to in this study as "the significant introduction," is the key element which guides the reader through the Qur'ān. El Tayeb illustrates the functions of the significant introduction in her hermeneutical analysis of the Qur'ān. Based on her work, this type of analysis is

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concerned with the meaning of the Qur'ān as a whole, along with all those features associated with its meaning, including how it is read, interpreted, and actualized in its original setting, and its relationship to the original readers and their response to it. The ultimate goal of such an introduction is to help readers understand the text by informing them of those essential elements associated with the meaning of the Qur'ān as a whole. According to El Tayeb some of those elements essential in a significant introduction are as follows:

a. The content, style, and form of the translation are essential because they relate to communication of meaning in its original setting.
b. The reading process relates to how the text is read, interpreted and actualized in its original setting.
c. The reader's requirements focus on what is required on the part of the original reader that is applicable to the targeted reader.
d. The universal ideals, themes, and concepts deal with those things that appeal to any reader.
e. The interrelation between the original and targeted reader deals with the bases for communicating the message in the text that can guarantee its appeal outside the original setting.
f. A comprehensive concern is with the target reader in terms of the source text, and not in terms of the target language alone. How does the translator inform the target readers about aspects of untranslatability, and about what is required on their part to transcend this problem in order to read understand and respond?[55]

The significant introduction can only respond to or address those essential factors relevant to comprehension of meaning if it contains the following information; without it, an introduction is neither informative nor valid:

a. A brief history of the Prophet, because he is the original interpreter of the Arabic Qur'ān.
b. An annotated bibliography.
c. Universal ideals or themes such as the concepts of God, prophethood and humanity found in the Qur'ān.

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d. An explanation of untranslatability.
e. A guide to the reading process.
f. A brief history of Qur'ān translation and commentary in English.
g. A description of the translator's own methodology in his or her version.
h. Recommendations on selecting exegesis.[56]

With these findings in mind, one should see that the significant introduction contained in English translations is a necessary tool, which guides the reader through the reading process. It is also crucial to the reader acquiring the correct meaning of the Qur'ān, and helps determine how the target reader receives this meaning. Therefore, the significant introduction is extremely important to this study because along with the support of *tafsīr* the reader should be able to grasp the Qur'ānic messages, understand its meanings and implications and respond to it. Specifically these tools (significant introduction and *tafsīr*) should help African American Muslim women (target readers) acquire a better and more complete understanding of the English translation of Qur'ān 4:34. For these reasons I will elaborate more on the reading process as one of the key elements associated with the meaning of the Qur'ān as a whole.

Within this reading process, one is informed that the Qur'ānic text is unique, in that it presents a reality that is to be actualized. Evidence of this is cited in the Qur'ān and it reads in part:

> There is nothing
> Whatever like unto Him
> and He is the One
> Who hears and sees. Q42:11.[57]

According to El Tayeb, the way this reality in the Qur'ān is presented is unique. It is not outlined or prescribed in a formula, but its subject (humanity), has to

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participate in assembling what is to be realized. In other words, the Qur'ān refers to a deeper level which is not related to the linguistic context as the essence of the communicability of its message. This level is designated as *fitrah*.[58] Ibn Kathīr defines "*fitrah*" as the pure state of knowledge that leads humankind to (praiseworthy) knowledge about the oneness and transcendence of God. All people are equally endowed with this knowledge."[59] Hence, *fitrah* is that innate ability to comprehend this reality. Consequently, it is not difficult for any target readers to discern from translated text elements that might appeal to their fitrah.[60] El Tayeb asserts that the text is also unique in providing its own data for this meaning-assembly process.

Unlike other texts, the Qur'ān does not depend for its understanding upon external elements pertinent to culture and social norms.[61] The Qur'ān provides all the elements that are essential (i.e.: reading process) to understanding its Divine revelations. Amina Wadud's Qur'ān and Woman expounds on these points by explaining that each reader must participate and interact with the text. However, according to this contemporary Muslim woman scholar, it should not be asserted that an individual reader with prior text (the language and cultural context in which the text is read) that this reading is the only possible or permissible one.

To assert that there is only one interpretation of the Qur'ān limits the extent of the text. Wadud further explains that the Qur'ān is flexible enough to accommodate the priori text of its readers because of its claim to be a universal message. The Qur'ān claims to be universally beneficial to those who believe.[62] Thus, the Qur'ān provides a reading process unaccounted for in any other text.[63] In this process, the text activates

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the reader's faculties (*fitrah*) of perceiving and processing through the concepts of *tadabbur* (contemplation, understanding), *ta'aqqul*, (meditation, understanding) *tafakkur*, (consideration, reflection), and *tafaqquh* (understanding).[64] There are approximately 90 verses using these concepts, which constitute the reading process where the reader perceives and processes the universal ideals of the Qur'ān. There are four verses regarding *tadabbur*. One verse reads as follows:

> Do they not then seek to
> understand the Qur'ān, or
> are their hearts locked up
> (by them)? Q47:24 [65]

There are four verses with reference to *ta'aqqul*: One verse is presented below:

> and showeth you His
> signs: Perchance ye may
> understand Qur'ān Q 2:73 [66]

There are more than fifty verses regarding *tafakkur*. One of those verses reads in part:

> ...Thus doth Allah make clear
> To you (His) Signs:
> That ye may consider. Q 2:266 [67]

There are eighteen verses with reference to *tafaqquh*: One verse reads in part:

> ...See how We explain
> The Signs in diverse ways;
> That they may understand. Q 6:65 [68]

Supporting El Tayeb and Wadud's findings on the reading process are several other works, which discuss the reading process. For the purpose of this work, I will only mention one other study found in the book The Way to the Qur'ān by Khurram Murad. In this book, the author explains the reading process; however, whereas El

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Tayeb refers to four concepts concerning man's ability to perceive and process, Murad refers to only two concepts. The concepts he used are *tadhakkur* and *tadabbur.*

According to Murad, *tadhakkur* is used extensively in the Qur'ān, and has been translated as "receiving admonition, deriving advice, remembering, taking heed, and taking to heart." It is the process in which the reader tries to accomplish the following:

> To grasp the general messages and teachings being conveyed by the Qur'ān, and how you may apply them in order to find out what they mean for you, and what demands they make upon you, to take them to heart, to bring forth corresponding responses of the heart, mind and attitudes, to have the will to act in accordance with whatever you find, and, finally, to determine what message you have to deliver to your fellow human beings. [69]

According to Murad, *tadhakkur* is a category of understanding, which, in its essential nature, should not require any level of scholarship. He explains that although the reader may not understand every verse in the Qur'ān, the general overall message to the reader (guidance to humankind on how to live) should come out clearly. The other category of understanding is *tadabbur,* which indicates that the reader should explore the fuller meaning behind the Qur'ān's metaphors and parables, discover the textual cohesion and delve into lexical intricacies, and research the historical background, and that you undertake a comparative study of different *tafsīrs.* Such a study would require a greater and deeper knowledge of various Qur'ānic disciplines.[70]

Based on the findings presented above, one should now see that it is crucial that English translations contain significant introductions. Without them, it is not probable that the targeted reader will be guided through the reading process so that he/she will be able to perceive and process those elements which are essential to the meaning of the

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Qur'ān. Yet the results of my analysis of English translations found in Chapter Five show that some of the translations do not meet the criteria for significant introductions nor do they render comprehensible interpretations that provide the correct Arabic meaning of Qur'ān 4:34. However, for the purpose of the discussion here, it is warranted to mention a few examples. I will start with those translations that do not have introductions that meet the criteria and then I will give examples of introductions that may fulfill either all or part of the criteria for significant introductions.

For those translations that do not meet the criteria, El Tayeb claims that most of the Orientalists translations belong in this category. For instance, both Alexander Ross' and George Sales' translations were inspired by hostile sentiments towards Islam. Thus, their introductions reflect this attitude and expose the prejudice with which they approached the text.[71] Ross begins his introduction with this statement:

> This translation is for Christians, and I thought good to bring it to their colors, that so viewing thine enemies in their full body, thou must the better prepare to encounter." [72]

Those introductions did not include any of the elements needed to create a significant introduction aimed at guiding the reader throughout the reading process. Ross' introduction certainly did not introduce the reader to the history of revelation through a brief outline of the Prophet's life. Further, it did not present the universal ideals, themes, concepts and other elements of significant introduction which appeal to any reader. Some translations by other Orientalists such as Rodwell and Dawood are not overtly hostile, yet they revealed the translators' personal misconceptions. According to El Tayeb, what is important in their introductions is virtually useless as far

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as the reader is concerned. A reader with no previous knowledge of the Qur'ān may be easily misguided. [73]

Regarding Sunni translations, some of their introductions do fulfill the criteria (at least part of it) of significant introductions. Most of the translators' introductions reflect their understanding of the text.[74] For example, Pickthall presents in his introduction an excellent brief history of the Prophet. This is significant since the Prophet is the original interpreter of the Arabic Qur'ān.[75] Yusuf Ali's introduction gives the basic creed, central themes and background to revelations, all of which are relevant aspect to the introduction and help the target reader approach the text.[76] Yusuf Ali is also noted for his comprehensive footnotes.[77] Similar to Ali's introduction, Maududi's introduction contains the universal ideals, themes, and concepts and other elements of significant introduction. Maududi[78] also informed the reader of those features in the Qur'ān that are untranslatable. Yet, in Pickthall's introduction, he states that the Qur'ān is untranslatable without giving the explanation of untranslatability or mentioning those untranslatable features previously discussed in this chapter.[79] One contemporary Muslim woman translator, Aisha Bewley focuses on the content, style, and form in her introduction. Bewley states in her introduction that her work is a new rendering in English which could be used as a tool for non-Arabic speaking readers to guide them through the reading process. [80]

The last category belongs to Qadyani Ahmadi translations. I will provide only one example (Omar's translation) which contains some of the elements of the significant introduction. In Omar's introduction, there is a description of the

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translator's own methodology in his or her version. The translator presents a method to study and understand the Qur'ān, standards of correct interpretation of the original Qur'ān, a short preview of translations by Orientalists, the role of reason, and other elements of a significant introduction. All of these informative factors assist in guiding the uninformed reader through the reading process. [81]

Now that I have discussed the importance of introductions, and have given a few examples of informative and uninformative introductions, it is necessary to proceed with my analysis of *tafsīr*. I am presenting my work on *tafsīr* before I continue with my analysis of English translation, because I am relying on the *tafsīrs* on this verse as the standard by which to review the English translations under investigation. Therefore, in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, I will deal with the significance of *tafsīr* as it relates to rendering a comprehensible meaning of Qur'ān 4:34. Then I will complete my examination of English translations in Chapter Five.

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Endnotes - Chapter One

[1] El Tayeb, p. xiii.
[2] Gauhar, pp. 2-3.
[3] Inayatullah, pp. 4-11.
[4] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" pp. 1-2.
[5] Gauhar, pp. 2-3.
[6] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 712.
[7] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1466.
[8] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1932.
[9] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 40.
[10] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1858.
[11] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1987.
[12] Von Denffer, pp. 31-34.
[13] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 623.
[14] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 686.
[15] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 764.
[16] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 907.
[17] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p.1453.
[18] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p.1467.
[19] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p.1474.
[20] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p.1496.
[21] Nasr, p. 4.
[22] Pickthall, p. ix.
[23] Mālik al-Muwatta translated by A. al-Tarjamanah & Y. Johnson, Norwich: Diwan Press, 1982. p. 434, Book 46, Hadīth 3. Also see: Mālik al-Muwatta tr. by M. Rahimuddin, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, p. 375, Book 32, Chapter 514, Hadīth 1599.
[24] al Bukhārī , Vol. 6, p. 474, Book 61, Chapter 1, Hadīth 504. Also see: al Bukhārī , Vol. 9, p. 282, Book 92, Chapter 1, Hadīth 379 and Muslim, (Siddiqi), Vol. 1, pp. 90-91, Book 1, Chapter 71, Hadīth 283, with notes: 283-285.
[25] von Grunebaum, "I'djaz" Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition, Vol. II, p. 1018.
[26] von Grunebaum, "I'djaz" Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition, Vol. II, p. 1018.
[27] Von Denffer, p. 149.
[28] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 805.
[29] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 12.
[30] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 559.
[31] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 585.
[32] El Tayeb, p. 21.
[33] El Tayeb, pp. 21-23.
[34] Nasr, p.5.
[35] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1082.
[36] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p.1404.
[37] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p.1496.
[38] El Tayeb, p. 42.
[39] El Tayeb, p. 41.
[40] El Tayeb, p. 20.
[41] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p.1284.
[42] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p.365.
[43] Naeem Siddiqi, p. 91-103.
[44] El Tayeb, p. 6-7.

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[45] El Tayeb, pp. 8-10.
[46] El Tayeb, p. 13.
[47] Al-Zurqānī, pp. 29-33. Also see El Tayeb, p. 18.
[48] Al-Zurqānī, pp. 33-35. Also see El Tayeb, p. 18.
[49] Al Nadwī, pp. 15-19. Also see El Tayeb, p. 20.
[50] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 1182.
[51] El Tayeb, pp. 304-306.
[52] El Tayeb, pp. 304-306.
[53] El Tayeb, pp. 304-306.
[54] El Tayeb, p.253.
[55] El Tayeb, pp. 227-229.
[56] El Tayeb, pp.262-268.
[57] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1567.
[58] El Tayeb, p. 188.
[59] El Tayeb, p. 188. Also see al-Sābūnī, Mukhtasar Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, 3 volumes - Part 3, p. 54.
[60] El Tayeb, p. 189.
[61] El Tayeb, p. 63.
[62] Wadud, pp. 5-6.
[63] El Tayeb, pp. 264-266.
[64] El Tayeb, pp. 69-70, 194.
[65] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1567.
[66] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 30.
[67] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 121-122.
[68] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 357.
[69] Murad, p. 77.
[70] Murad, pp.77-88.
[71] El Tayeb, p. 255.
[72] Ross, p. xi.
[73] El Tayeb, p. 255.
[74] El Tayeb, p. 255.
[75] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" p. 6.
[76] El Tayeb, p. 255.
[77] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" pp. 20-22.
[78] Maududi, Vol. 1, pp. 12-23, 28, 33-36.
[79] Pickthall, p. ix.
[80] Bewley, pp. iii - iv.
[81] Omar, pp. 31a, 37a, 44a-49a.

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CHAPTER TWO
THE SCIENCE OF TAFSĪR

> Without *Tafsīr* there will be no understanding of the various passages of the Qur'ān [1]

The first chapter of this dissertation discussed some general problems in translating the Qur'ān. It argued that English translations need valid and informative introductions in order to guide the reader through the reading process. This is necessary because the reader of the Qur'ān is not only an observer, but also a participant. Therefore, the reader must participate inside the text, in order to realize that the Qur'ān is intended for contemplation, comprehension, and the finding of its universal ideals. Most importantly, contemplation of these ideals should initiate some active response, which may lead the reader to discover the overall purport of the text. However, I found that the most popular translations read by African American Muslim women lacked introductions of high quality and were heavily influenced by the work of early Orientalists. Furthermore, in some instances the introduction may not have helped the uninformed reader to understand that the Qur'ānic text is unique, that it actually presents a reality that is to be realized, and that its subject (humanity) must participate in assembling that reality.

In other words without "the significant introduction," the reader may not be aware that the Qur'ān provides a reading process in which its reader is reminded to reflect on and understand the text. In addition to this point, I have mentioned repeatedly in this study that *tafsīr* is the primary tool, which brings out the vital context

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of the translated verses, and helps the reader to understand the intended meaning of God's revelation. Subsequently, the intent of Chapters Two, Three and Four, which are crucial to my thesis, is to demonstrate this point. These chapters will illustrate that with the support of *tafsīr* it is possible for translations to fully reproduce or render the richness of some of the multiple meanings of the Qur'ān specifically as it relates to verse 4:34. With this idea in mind, in spite of all the difficulties involved in translations, English translations can still convey significant amounts of explanation.[2]

Therefore, it is in the followings chapters on *tafsīr* where I will discuss the underlying meanings of verse 4:34 in the Arabic Qur'ān so that one may measure the problematic and controversial Arabic terms. Further, I realized that the interpretations or meanings derived from this verse are not exhaustible and there is not just one correct interpretation. However, it is with the support of the science of *tafsīr* by early scholars that I will find what I considered the best or most appropriate translation(s). Consequently, it is against this background that I will determine in Chapter Five whether the English translations correctly interpret the intended meaning of Qur'ān 4:34.

The chapters in this section of my work are divided as follows: in Chapter Two, I will begin with the brief historical account of the development of *tafsīr*s then go on to discuss the function of *ḥadīth* and the role of historical Muslim women. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the complexities surrounding the exegesis of Qur'ān 4:34. In Chapter Four I will complete the examination of this verse by some of the early and

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contemporary scholars of *tafsīr* and use the result of this analysis to measure whether or not the English translations in Chapter Five actually render comprehensible meaning.

Historical Development of *Tafsīr*

In a *saḥīh ḥadīth*, the Prophet is reported to have said,

> ... Do not take down anything from me, and he who took down anything from me except the Qur'ān, he should efface that and narrate from me, for there is no harm in it, and he who attributed any falsehood to me – and Hammām said: I think he also said: "deliberately" – he should in fact find his abode in the Hell-Fire. [3]

According to Muslim tradition this statement represents a temporary injunction that the Prophet of Islam gave to his companions during the time when the Qur'ān was being revealed to him. And since the Prophet is considered as "interpreter par excellence" of the Qur'ān, the interpreter responsible for interpreting and explaining the Qur'ān (*kalam* of God) in its exact and precise wording, he gave this order so that his companions could distinguish between the revelation of the Qur'ān and his *Sunnah*, those things that he said, did and approved of. Subsequently, the recording of Qur'ān would not be confused with any *ḥadīth* reports about him. Evidence of his status of infallibility (*'iṣmah*) in matters of explaining God's revelation is found in the following verse. Qur'ān 14:4 reads,

> We sent not a messenger
> Except (to teach) in the language
> Of his (own) people, in order
> To make (things) clear to them
> So Allah leads astray
> Those whom He pleases
> And He is Exalted in power,
> Full of Wisdom. [4]

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Therefore, when the need for explanation of the Qur'ān arose quite early among the companions, the Prophet was able to answer their questions and to correctly and clearly explain the Qur'ān, but he did not allow them to record his explanations. However, later in the Prophet's life, he allowed the companions in some cases to record his *ḥadīth*.[5] Thus, it was the *ḥadīth* (compilation of reports on the *Sunnah*) that was the core of exegesis, or explanation of Qur'ān. Exegesis is a major concern of the *ḥadīth*. According to Helmut Gatje in his work which deals with the exegesis of the Qur'ān, he explains that scholarly exegesis was developed based on religious traditions or *Sunnah* of the Prophet later to be compiled in reports called *ḥadīth*.[6]

After the demise of the Prophet, his companions begin to explain the Qur'ān, which led to the development of *tafsīr* as a separate science. Some research states that it was around the 3rd century of Islam when this scholarly exegesis became an independent science.[7] The word *tafsīr* is derived from the root word *fassara*- to explain, to expound.

> In the technical language the word *tafsīr* is used for explanation, interpretation and commentary on the Qur'ān, comprising all the ways of obtaining knowledge, which contributes to the right and proper understanding of it; explains its meaning and clarifies its legal implications.[8]

Therefore, *tafsīr* may be defined as the translation of the meaning of the Qur'ān with explanation or commentary. Since *tafsīr* determines the meaning of the Qur'ān as explained by the exemplary reader (Prophet Muhammad) and understood by the

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receptors, it is the method employed to understand the meaning, wisdom, prescription, and commands of the Qur'ān[9] . The only verse in the Qur'ān to mention the word *tafsīr* is in 25:33 and it reads:

> And no question do they
> Bring to thee but We
> Reveal to thee the truth
> And the best explanation
> (thereof). [10]

Tafsīr focuses primarily on *ḥadīth* of what the Prophet said and did, and what the companions illustrated, based on their understanding of the *Sunnah.* As stated previously, it was the Prophet Muhammad who first explained the Qur'ān, then his companions, and then the followers of the companions. This led to the formulation of the science of *tafsīr.* There are different types of *tafsīr.* This study will discuss two types, *tafsīr b'il-ma'thur* or traditional exegesis and *tafsīr bi'l-ra'y* or exegesis by independent opinion.

Tafsīr Bi'l-Ma'thur – Traditional Exegesis

Tafsīr bi'l-ma'thur means exegesis by tradition, where one cites *ḥadīths* of the Prophet or other traditions as explanation and does not give one's own opinion (*r'ay*), except to explain perhaps why one favors one traditional over another. Of course, the traditions require explanation. The traditional method of translation is to explain or comment verse by verse. According to Jane Smith, a modern scholar in Islam, traditional exegesis is called *tafsīr bi'l-ma'thur,* which was characterized by repetition of *ḥadīth* material transmitted through acceptable chain of authority. Further, *bi'l-*

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ma'thur is an explanation and interpretation of the Qur'ān based on knowledge of authoritative religious tradition (*'ilm*). Traditional *tafsīr* was more concerned with retention of the text of religious tradition and defense against any commentary that was not in the traditional sense, and less concerned with the progress of textual study. This pre-set pattern did not preclude various interpretations of any one verse as long as the interpretation had the support of a respectable chain of authority (*isnad*). According to Smith, this was the only critical study accepted by the pious believers in the first century.[11]

During my research, I found the problem with this type of *tafsīr* is making sure that *ḥadīth* are authentic. According to Ibn Taymiyyah's book on the Principles of *Tafsīr*, many times weak and/or fabricated *aḥādīth* were included in exegesis.[12] This is based on the fact that only a part of *ḥadīth* in reference to exegesis are *musnad* which means the tradition came down from the Prophet. Of this type, there were many *aḥādīth* which were *mutawatir*: that is, they are reported in so many ways by so many reliable narrators that their authenticity becomes absolutely certain. However, the majority of *aḥādīth* are solitary isolated reports (*khabar al-waahid*). Most of these are also reported by a successor directly from the Prophet (*mursal*). *Ḥadīth* theory held the *mursal* to be weak. Consequently, a number of weak and even fabricated *aḥādīth* are in *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān.[13] Even though some weak or fabricated *ḥadīth* crept into exegesis, the early scholars of *ḥadīth* made every human effort to scrutinize *aḥadīth* in order to ensure the authenticity and authority of the corpus of the *ḥadīth*, including that used in the *tafsīr*.

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Further, Ibn Taymiyyah's stated that there were some differences in the exegesis of the early scholars. However, the distinction was not in matters of contradictions but there was a difference in variances of their work, and how they applied the principles of *tafsīr*. For example some of the principles of *tafsīr* deal with different classifications of words and meanings of the same words. One exegete may use one group of words to express the meaning while another scholar may use different words to derive the same meaning. Additional differences arise from the influence from the Jewish and Christian doctrines. This circumstance occurs because the *tafsīr* transmission from the Prophet through the companions and successors does not cover all the verses in the Qur'ān requiring explanation.

The scholars of this early period (up to the third century) try to fill the gaps by relying on their knowledge of Arabic, and the ways of the Arab Muslims and the historical circumstances of the era of the Prophet and the companions. They depend on the stories of the Jews (Israelites), which found their way into the Qur'ān, for example, the revelations on the creation of Adam and events in the garden are generously explained by exegetes with the support of Jewish texts but never acknowledged as such. Finally, Ibn Taymiyyah states that in regard to the occasions of revelation, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the exegetes may differ in this area.[14]

The benefit of this type of exegesis, *bi'l-ma'thur*, is that it includes the oldest traditions, transmissions, and explanations of the Qur'ān's verses. Indeed, most of these traditions are attributed to the Prophet himself or his companions. The fact that the Companions were close to Muhammad is significant for the following reasons.

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1. They were aware of the occasion of revelation and the circumstances that prompted the revelation.
2. They were more equipped to understand because they received first hand-guidance from Muhammad, the final prophet of God. [15]

Tafsīr bi'l-Ra'y – Exegesis by Independent or Personal Opinion

The next type of *tafsīr* is exegesis by opinion. In order to use their opinion, exegetes must have knowledge of the Qur'ān, the occasions of revelation, and the Prophet's *Sunnah*. Technically speaking, exegetes may only use their opinions after they have thoroughly examined the Prophet's statements and actions. The exegete examines how the Companions arrived at their conclusions in the *ḥadīth*. The exegetes also evaluated the opinions of Companions, and did not necessarily take them at face value. For example, if a Companion says that a certain verse was revealed in competition with another verse and it is authentic, then his statement is given consideration, but it is not taken as final word if it is just a matter of opinion reflecting how the Companion understood it.[16]

According to al-Ghazali in his great, Ihyā''ulūm al-dīn, *tafsīr bi'l-ra'y* can only be prohibited for two reasons. One is that the opinion of the exegete is influenced by his nature or passion. In such a case, the exegete might interpret the Qur'ān according to his opinion (*ra'y)* and passion in order to support his private purpose. The second reason for prohibiting opinion occurs when the exegete hastens to explain the Qur'ān by considering the rules of Arabic language without knowing by heart what was heard and transmitted from the earlier authorities, for example, in the case of Qur'ānic verses which use strange Qur'ānic words or ambiguous terms, or where substitution or

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omission of words occurs.[17] Al-Ghazali adds that *tafsīr* by personal opinion was only prohibited for the reasons mentioned above, and this prohibition was never intended to limit the understanding of the Qur'ān to that which one hears and receives from authority. He states that if this were the case, why would the Prophet have prayed for Ibn 'Abbās to have understanding of the religion so that he could teach the interpretation of *ta'wil* of the Qur'ān?[18]

The Qur'ān urges one to reflect, to attempt to understand and to exercise one's opinion. However, according to traditional exegesis, using one's opinion does not replace authentic and clear evidence found in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah.* One's opinion should be consistent with Islamic Law (*Shari'ah*). An exegete cannot use his opinion to make what is permitted (*halal*), or prohibited (*haram*), and what is *haram, halal. Tafsīr bi'l a ma'thur* must include proof that supports the particular ideology or opinion that is consistent with authentic references.[19]

Developmental Stages of *Tafsīr*

To illustrate the development of *tafsīr* in more detail I will now present a brief account of its origin and main trends in the following five stages. However, based on my research I found that the sequence of these stages cannot be maintained chronologically because there were stages that overlapped each other.

Based on the work of Faruqi, author of, The Tarjuman Al- Qur'ān: a critical analysis of Maulana Abu'l-Kalam Azad's approach to the understanding of the Qur'ān,

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the first stage of *tafsīr* begins during the days of the Prophet and extends to the Companions (*Sahabas*) and their companions (*tabi'un*). Chronologically this period spans from the time of the Prophet to the early decades of the second century of the Muslim era (A.H.).[20] During the beginning of this period the Prophet was the first to explain text, then after his death his Companions explained text. His Companions, such as the righteous caliphs, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali, followed the Prophet's tradition.[21] Other Companions that are renowned for their profound knowledge of the Qur'ān are Ibn-i Masud, ibn 'Abbās, Uba'i ibn Ka'b, Zaid ibn Thabit, Abu Masa al-Ash'ari and Abdallah ibn Zubair. Of them ibn 'Abbās, ibn-i Masud, 'Ali bin Abi Thabit and Uba'i ibn Ka'b are noted for their interpretation of the Qur'ān. However, ibn 'Abbās is accorded special distinction for his clear understanding of the Qur'ān.[22]

During this time, the science of *tafsīr* was developed. The Companions relied on the Qur'ān, *Sunnah* and knowledge of Arabic and independent opinion (*ra'y*) for their exegesis of the Qur'ān. The *tabi'un* depended on Judeo-Christian sources, perhaps due to the increasing number of Christian converts to Islam. Converts such as Abdullah bin Salam, Ka'b al-Ahbar, Wahab bin Munabbih and 'Absal Malik ibn Juraij were great scholars of past tradition and provided necessary information regarding their traditions to *tabi'un* scholars of the Qur'ān. The *tabi'un* also used *ra'y* in their interpretation of the Qur'ān. However, they strictly followed the conditions laid down by their predecessor and applied *ra'y* only *in* the interpretations of those verses which were left unexplained by the Prophet, or his Companions.[23] During this stage schools, which existed only loosely in the sense of study circles, developed in important cities in Mecca. Ibn 'Abbās

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and his students headed these circles. In Medina, schools were led by Ubayy b. Ka'b and his students. In Iraq, there were many exegetes (*mufassirūn)*; the principal teacher was Ibn Mas'ud.[24] However, there were no educational institutions at this stage.

The second stage spanned approximately from the last decades of the Ummayyad rule and lasted until almost the end of the first quarter of the third century A.H. This is the period of the disciples of the *Tabi'in* (*Taba'Tabi'in*).[25] Up until this time, *ḥadīth* were not categorized, however, at this stage the process of compilation took place. The *mufassirūn* collected information about *tafsīr* in the manner of *ḥadīth* collection. Thus, *tafsīr* was part of *ḥadīth* collection and had not yet become a separate science. There was no distinction between *mufassirūn and muhaddithun.*[26] *Tafsīr* traditions were part of general *ḥadīth* reports from the Prophet to his Companions. Oral interpretation and explanation of the Qur'ān was written down. Writing and codification also took place during this stage. According to my research, there were some changes in the structure of exegetical literature of the Qur'ān. For instance, there was a group of *Taba'Tabi'in* scholars, particularly in Iraq, who were more inclined to use independent opinion (*ra'y*) in interpreting the Qur'ān. This trend gained currency resulting in multi-dimensional development of *tafsīr* literature during the succeeding centuries. Hence, from the beginning there were two trends of *tafsīr* literature, traditional exegesis (*tafsīr b'il-ma'thur*) and exegesis by independent opinion (*tafsīr bi'l-ra'y*).[27]

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The third stage began approximately during the middle of the third century, A.H. Exegetical literature was separated from the main body of *ḥadīth* literature and came to be established as an independent discipline. It was at this stage that the interpretation of the whole of the Qur'ān, verse by verse, was completed. [28]

The scholars during this time were the successors of the *Taba'Tabi'in.* Some of the famous exegetes were Ibn Majah (d.273/886), Abu Bakr al-Manzar (d.369/979) and al-Hakim (d.405/1041). However, the most noted scholar among them is Ibn Jarīr al-Al-Tabarī (d. 310/923). Tabarī's commentary on the Qur'ān, Jamial-bayan fi-tafsīr al Qur'ān, is an encyclopedic work in thirty volumes. His work is not only the oldest, it is also considered a leading authority of traditional interpretation of the Qur'ān (*tafsīr b'il-ma'thur.*) His work is recognized as the most important work because it was the first complete interpretation of Qur'ān.[29]

According to Abdul, author of The Qur'ān: Shaykh Tabarsi's Commentary, the science of *tafsīr* grew and was classified into the following four categories: legalistic, (from the knowledge (*'ilm*) of which no one is excused); linguistic (based on the speech of the Arabs); formal exegesis of scholars; and *tafsīr al Mutashabihat*, (meaning allegorical or ambiguous passages).[30]

Further, Faruqi argues that with the growth and expansion of Islamic civilization and the formation of new academic disciplines, the use of independent opinion in the interpretation of the Qur'ān increased. However, the writing of traditional exegesis (*tafsīr b'il-ma'thur)* was not diminished.[31]

The fourth stage lasted from the middle of the third century, A.H. into the early

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decades of the fourth century, A.H. [32] According to Faruqi, this stage is marked with great activity, many commentaries were written by scholars using diversified approaches to interpretation of the Qur'ān. Both Faruqi and Abdul agree that *tafsīr* came to be associated with a variety of interests; i.e.: philology, jurisprudence, and scholastics in doctrinal and sectarian schools. If a scholar distinguished himself in one of the above fields of knowledge, he could then make it a basis for his commentary. For example, concerning jurisprudence (*fiqh*) the juridical scholar employs the *tafsīr* to project doctrines of his school of thought and argues with his opponent on the points of fiqh differences rather than on the matters of the text [33]

However, in the field of traditional exegesis (*tafsīr bi'l ma'thur*) there was much confusion during this stage. For instance, Faruqi writes that some of the scholars of *tafsīr* were not very particular in sifting the genuine traditions from the weak ones. There was a tendency to ignore the chain of narrators. As a result, some fabricated narrations, came to be regarded as authentic traditions. Moreover, some inauthentic material from Jewish and Christian circles was accepted wholeheartedly.[34]

Faruqi identified a fifth stage of tafsir development that began in the fourth century, A.H. and continues through the present time. During this stage, although traditional exegesis (*tafsīr b'il-ma'thur*) has been maintained, there is an increased tendency towards the use of personal interpretation (*tafsīr b'il-ra'y*) as well as philosophical speculation. The field of *tafsīr* became dominated by those commentaries of the Qur'ān in which traditional interpretation was combined with independent opinion of the commentators. Thus, while scholars wrote *tafsīr b'il-ra'y*, their work can be separated

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into two categories; the permissible and the condemned. Enormous volumes of *tafsīr* were produced in both categories.[35] However, for the purpose of this study it is not warranted that I give a detailed explanation of all trends in *tafsīr* writing in this stage. This study relies primarily on the *tafsīr b'il-ma'thur* and *tafsīr b'il-ra'y* of some of the traditional scholars from the first to fourteenth century, A.H. There is a more detailed discussion of some of these scholars in Chapter Four.

I will conclude this brief account of the historical development of *tafsīr* with some comments on modern *tafsīr*. Modern *tafsīr* began in the nineteenth century, C.E. as a reaction to the challenges of western modernity. According to Dr. Ayoub, in his work The Qur'ān and Its Interpreters, Shaikh Muhammad 'Abdul (d.1905) and his disciple Sayyid Muhammad Rashid Rida (d.1935) are the most noted scholars of the early phase of this period. Another noted scholar is Sayyid Qutb (d.1966), who was an Egyptian thinker, head of the Muslim Brotherhood and is distinguished by his conscious effort to remain within the purview of the Qur'ān. His work is favored by both Shi'i and Sunni Muslims; especially amongst their youth.[36] According to Smith, the twentieth century presented new directions in *tafsīr* writing, with focus more on the exegetes' ideas rather than passage-by-passage explication and interpretation of sacred text.

Using this method the Qur'ān is primarily used to support the exegete's ideas. Smith adds that modern *tafsīr* demonstrated that the essence of Islam is its universality. The verses of the Qur'ān are messages which give the reader an understanding of life and a reality that is applicable to all people, all times, and all circumstances. To Smith, contemporary *tafsīr* and dogmatic writings are an attempt to re-interpret scriptures in

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the light of modernity. Consequently, modern criticism attempts to explain where traditional commentary went wrong, with clear exposition of what should serve as the basis of exegesis. Smith concludes that modern work attempts to reconcile that understanding with the science of today. [37]

The Function of Ḥadīth in Exegesis

Since one of the main objectives of *tafsīr* is to explain the meaning of the Qur'ān and to bring clarity in cases where the Qur'ān is ambiguous and vague, *tafsīr* includes auxiliary branches such as the following areas: occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nusūl*), abrogation of verses (*naskh*), ambiguous verses (*mutashābih*), and explicit verses (*muhkam*). The other branches of *tafsīr* deal with the Makkan (revealed before the *hijra* (A.D. 622) or emigration of the Prophet to Madina) and Madīnian (revealed after the *hijra*) revelations and the compilation of the Qur'ān. The following will demonstrate the function of *ḥadīth* in *tafsīr* as it relates to auxiliary branches of *tafsīr*. The various functions of *ḥadīth* may be seen in different kinds of text, which are found in the collections of traditions.

1. *Asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation) represent information about historical events and circumstances that related to the revelation of particular Qur'ānic passages. These traditions are significant because they help one to understand the intent and meaning of a verse within its original context. They give the underlying reasons for the legal rulings in the Qur'ān. *Asbāb al-nuzūl* help to distinguish those passages in the Qur'ān which are solely attached to the historical events and those verses which, although attached to historical events, also have wider implications. Occasions of revelation traditions do this by: clarifying the events and circumstances which are connected with the revelation of a certain verse, and illustrating the application of such verses by referring to

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situations when the Companions of the Prophet found them appropriate and applicable.

Most important, *asbāb al-nuzūl* help one to understand the historical milieu of the Prophet and the development of the early Muslin community. [38]

Aḥādīth of this type are very numerous, and are almost invariably introduced by words, such as, 'then was revealed this verse...', by virtue of their formal characteristics might also be considered as examples of an application to life of the Qur'ān verse in question.[39] The following examples, a to e illustrate this point:

a. Surat al-hashr (Q.59:9) speaks of those who 'give preference to the poor over themselves, in spite of their own poverty. Abu Hurayrah reported that a guest spent the night at the home of one of the Ansar. The host had only enough food for his children. He said to his wife, 'Put the little ones to sleep, and turn out the lamp. Then give to our guest that which we have.' At that time the verse was revealed, 'Those who give preference to the poor...[40]

b. The application of Qur'ānic verses to life situations of either the Prophet or his Companions: By relating the Qur'ānic verse to an event, something of the intent of the revealed message is made known: Ibn Mas'ud reported that the messenger of God entered Mecca and around the House (of God) were 360 idols. He began to strike them with the rod in his hand and say,' Truth has come and falsehood has passed away Truly, falsehood is bound to pass away' (Q.17/81). [41]

c. Reflections by Muhammad or by his Companions on verses: Reflections on verses may be historical, eschatological, or they may pertain to the experience of the speaker. Abu Umama reported that the Messenger of God said, 'No people go astray after having received guidance, which they follow except that they become contentious.' Then the Messenger of God recited this verse, '...they only raise an objection to argue: but then, they are contentious people' (Q.43/58).[42]

d. Explanations of verses in response to queries: 'Abd Allah ibn Masud reported that when this verse was revealed, '...those who believed and did not obscure their faith with iniquity ... (Q.6/82), it troubled the Muslims, and they said, 'O Messenger of God, which of us has not wronged himself?' He said, 'That is not it. The verse refers to idolatry (shirk). Did you not hear what Luqman said to his son, "O my son, do not associate any deity with God. Truly, idolatry is a great iniquity" (Q.31/13)'[43] An Egyptian narrator reported: I questioned Abu'l-Darda about this verse. 'They will have the great news in this life (Q.10/64). He said, 'No one has asked me about that verse since I asked the messenger of God about it. And he said to me, "No one has asked me

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about it since it was revealed except you. It refers to the authentic vision which the Muslim will see or which will be seen in his behalf"[44]

c. Details of ritual practice and social behavior: Abu Hurayrah reported the Prophet as saying: 'Communal prayer is twenty-five times superior to prayer alone. The angels of the night and those of the day assemble at the time of the early morning prayer.' Abu Hurayrah added, Recite if you wish: 'The recitation of the Qur'ān at dawn is always witnessed' (Q.17/78).[45]

2. *Muhkam* (clear, explicit) and *mutashābih* (ambiguous; not clear; implied): The following examples deal with those verses that are *muhkam*, *mutashābih*, and meanings of obscure words.

   a. Al-Tabarī uses the repetition of *aḥādīth* reported on the authority of both Ibn 'Abbās and the Prophet himself to explain verses of this type. For example, in verse 3:7 he employs exegetical *aḥādīth* to classify the *muhkam* verse from the *mutashābih* verses. His commentary on this verse is amongst the lengthiest in his *Tafsīr*, which indicates the importance he accorded to the classification. He also used repetition of *ḥadīth* to explain those verses, of which only God knows the interpretation, i.e., like the hour or the sending of Isa ibn Maryam at the time of the hour of resurrection. To support this position he uses verse 7:187 – which deals with the problem of those who harassed the Prophet for knowledge of the hour, which he did not know. This knowledge is only known to God (this is *mutashābih*). Al-Tabarī uses exegetical *aḥādīth* in his commentary on verses which can only be interpreted by the Prophet; which are those verses which have legal consequences and may be understood only in the light of Prophet's explanation of them (these are *muhkam* verses).[46]

   b. Meanings of obscure words: *Surat al-kawthar* (Q.108) contains the much-disputed word, *kawthar*, in verse 1. The two main interpretations are found reconciled in the following text: Sa'id ibn Jubayr reported that Ibn 'Abbās said regarding *kawthar*, 'It is the blessing that God gave Muhammad.' Abu Bishr said, 'I said to Sa'id ibn Jubayr, "People think that it is a river in paradise". Then Sa'id said, 'The river in paradise is part of the blessing that God gave him.'[47] This tradition reconciles the two positions by combining both reports into one narration.

3. The last example deals with *Naskh* (abrogation)

   Naskh refers to certain parts of revelation, which has been abrogated by others within the context of the following verse. 'None of our revelations do we abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, but we substitute something better or similar, knowest thou not that God has power over all things?'[48] Other scholars state that *Naskh* is obliteration, or transfer from one state to another. It is

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> suspension or replacement of one *Shari'ah* ruling by another. *Naskh* applies to the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. It was confined to only one period, and that is the lifetime of the Prophet. There is no *naskh* after the demise of the Prophet. *Naskh* was necessary because of the migration or *hijra* from Makka to Madīna and because of that there was a change in the social structure of the community. An example is the three verses in the Qur'ān on wine. Wine drinking was prevalent in pre-Islam Arabia and highly esteemed, therefore the ruling on the prohibition of intoxicants were introduced by God in stages to allow people to gradually change their habits and adjust to the new prescriptions (4:43; 2:210; 5:93-4). There were certain rules that were introduced in the early stages of the development of Islam such as temporary marriage (*muta'*). After the *hijra* from Makka to Madīna, *muta'* marriages were prohibited. Further Naskh is important because it is a precondition for explaining *tafsīr* of Qur'ān and, for understanding the application of *Shari'ah* or the ruling (*hukum*) of *Shari'ah*. It also sheds light on the historical development of *Shari'ah's* legal code and helps one to understand the immediate meaning of the verse concerned. [49]

The aforementioned are just a few examples of the function of *ḥadīth* in the exegetical tradition. All of the classical exegetes relied on *aḥādīth* for Qur'ānic interpretation. As well, exegetical tradition regarding commentary on the Qur'ān is found in the canonical collection of *aḥādīth* tradition.

Role of Early Muslim Women in *Aḥādīth* and *Tafsīr*

> "There is no blame at all for a woman to become involved with any aspect of seeking knowledge and teaching it..."[50]
> "...and it is in the science of *hadīth* [including exegetical tradition] that woman has played an important an active role side by side with men". [51]

The quote from the book, Hadīth Literature, written by Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, implies that Muslim women had a crucial role in *ḥadīth* and exegesis. In his work, Siddiqi states that although history records few enterprises prior to contemporary times in which women played an important and active role side by side with men, it was

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the science of *ḥadīth* and exegesis which formed an outstanding exception in this regard. According to Siddiqi, Islam is a religion that refuses to attribute gender to the Godhead, and never appointed a male priestly elite to serve as intermediary between creature and Creator. Thus, life began with the assurance that while men and women are equipped by nature for complementary rather than identical roles, no spiritual superiority inheres in the masculine principle.[52] Therefore, women attained eminence in *ḥadīth* and exegesis because the Muslim community was willing to entrust matters of greatest religious responsibility to women who, as sisters to men, were of equal worth in God's sight. This explanation affirms Islam has produced a large number of outstanding female scholars, on whose testimony and sound judgment much of the edifice of Islam depends.

Substantiating these findings, early Muslim women were able to attain eminence and become great scholars mainly because it was the Prophet himself who empowered them to do so. In a *ḥadīth* narrated by Umm 'Atiyya, the Prophet orders the women of the Ansār to gather in a public place and sends 'Umar to teach them the sciences of Islam.[53] Al-Disūqī states in her research that these women had educational evenings when the Prophet taught them the doctrines of Islam.[54] In addition, some of the most powerful patriarchal and feared tribesmen became followers of Muhammad. In another *ḥadīth* in Bukhari, Ibn 'Abbās narrates that 'Umar stated, that in pre-Islamic days women were of no significance, women to men.[55] Nevertheless, when revelations became manifest regarding women's rights, men radically changed their abusive ways towards them. The very men who were deeply influenced by patriarchal politics willingly decided to adhere to the principles of the new religious elements of Islam, and

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made every effort to alter their oppressive attitudes and disposition towards women. In addition, it was the Companions' acceptance, understanding and proper application of the religious principles which resulted in the fair and equitable treatment of women. Early Muslim men no longer restricted women nor did they interfere with their full participation in the development of Islam.[56] To support this in Qur'ān 4:19, God says to live with them according to *maruf*, meaning that which is suitable to the women's nature, and does not violate Islamic law or tradition. *Maruf* also means it is expected that men show *shahamah*, or chivalry in their treatment of women.[57] During the first 10 centuries of Islam, women made remarkable inroads in Islamic scholarship. However, for the purpose of this work, I will only give some illustrations, which give evidence of the role of Muslim women in *ḥadīth* and exegesis.

Out of all of the aspects of Qur'ānic exegesis *asbāb al-nuzūl*, or occasions of revelation, is the one aspect where Muslim women were frequently utilized to elucidate the meaning of the Qur'ān. This is significant because many of the early Muslim women, especially the Prophet's wives, had first hand knowledge of historical events connected with some of the revelation; therefore, it was easier for them to explain and amplify the meaning of the revealed text. Also the Prophet's wives were referred to as "Mothers of the Believers" in the Qur'ān. This title was revealed late in the Madīnian verse, 33:6. Because of the divine guidance from God by way of His last Messenger, they had special dignity along with more stringent obligations than any other believing women. In Qur'ān: 33:32, God says, "they are not like any other women." They emerge in the Qur'ān as models of the principle of ethical individualism.[58] An example of this is

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their commitment to God and His Prophet. They set customary and legal precedents that served as the foundation of a later Shari'ah legal structure. The Prophet's wives were definitely included in God's revelation as exemplars, as is well established in the Qur'ānic text, even though the wording in the sacred text is general and does not identify the wives by name. But, in *asbāb al-nuzūl*, many of their names are included.

'Aishah, the Prophet's third wife, is especially respected as a reliable exegete of Qur'ān, her most noted exegesis being the one elucidating Qur'ān 24:1-20. These verses deal with the slander against 'Aishah and explain the stringent rules for proving adultery and the harsh penalty for unsubstantiated allegations against a woman. 'Aishah is also shown explaining Qur'ān 4:43 which permits ritual ablution with clean soil (*tayammum*) when no water is available. 'Aishah was respected as a first rate authority of *aḥādīth*. She narrated approximately 2200 *aḥādīth* dealing with personal law and Islamic doctrines. 'Aishah transmitted more traditions than any other woman transmitter. However, the Prophet's other wives were also major contributors in the science of *ḥadīth*.[59] Many of their *aḥādīth* were used in *tafsīrs* of the early exegetes.

The prophet's marriage to Hadrat Zaynab bint Jaḥsh was connected to *asbāb al-nuzūl* in relation to the following revelations:

1. Qur'ān 33:37 expressly permitted marriages to the ex-wives of adopted sons by revelation and served as a precedent for the legality of such unions.[60]
2. Qur'ān 33:53 stated that Muslims may not marry the Prophet's wives after his death.[61]
3. Qur'ān 33:53 also related the proper Islamic etiquette (*adab)* for visiting the Prophet.[62]
4. Qur'ān 33:53 also set the concept of veiling (*Hijab)* for Muslim women.[63]
5. Qur'ān 33:36 implied equality by stating "Male or female may not have an opinion in God's decision once He has decreed a matter."[64]

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Furthermore, in Qur'ān 33:50 you find the category of women lawful to the Prophet for marriage. The Prophet was given unrestricted polygyny for himself as sanctioned by God. [65] At least three Muslim women are connected to an obscure verse that permits the Prophet to marry his paternal and maternal cousins who emigrated with him, and "a believing woman if she gives herself unto the Prophet." In the case of Maymuna bint al-Harith, at least twenty-seven traditions are related concerning whether the marriage was lawful or forbidden. Several of Muhammad's wives are mentioned in exegesis which explains "The Banning," the episode related to Ayat al-Takhyir (33:28-29) [66] that tells of the Prophet withdrawing from his wives and threatening divorce but then relenting. The Prophet's wives are also mentioned in the exegesis of Qur'ān 66:1-5 [67] which speaks of a crisis in the Prophet's household, perhaps the same one and Qur'ān 33:30-34 [68] which speaks of double punishment and double rewards for the Prophet's wives because they are like no other women. The above Qur'ānic legislations directed to the Prophet's wives are of Madīnian provenance and belong to the last six or seven years of Muhammad's life. [69]

In reference to the ruling abolishing divorce by *zihār*, Qur'ān 58:1-4 [70] opens with verses about Khawlah bint Tha'labah al Mujadilah, wife of Aws, who complained to the Prophet that her husband had divorced her using the oath of *zihār* "be thou to me as the back of my mother." The woman wanted the divorce declared invalid, and the Prophet accepted her wishes after the revelation, adding a penalty for the redemption of the oath. [71]

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Early Muslim women are also mentioned in exegesis about al-Muhijirat or the emigrant Makkan women in al-Madīnah. The commentary on Umm Kulthum bint 'Uqba, "she who is to be examined" in Qur'ān 60:10-12 [72], refers to believing women who came to the Muslims as fugitives or emigrants (*muhajirat*) and who were to be given sanctuary if they sincerely pledged fealty to the Prophet. Umm Kulthum was an early convert in Makka, but she came to Madina after the Truce of *Hudaybiyya*, according to which the Muslims agreed to return all fugitives. When her brothers came after her, demanding her return, the verses were revealed that sanctioned refuge for her and other Muslim female refugees. As well when these women took the oath of fealty to the Prophet, their admission to Islam was open and they were to have protection from the non-believers. [73]

Other wives of the Prophet are connected to verses, which do not refer specifically to women. For instance, among the well-known stories explicating Muhammad's marriage to Umm Habiba bint Abu Sufyan, the daughter of one of his foremost opponents, is the occasion for the verse Qur'ān 60:7 [74] "Allah forbiddeth you not those who warred not against you on account of religion and drove you not out from your homes." The subsequent verses with similar content are explained as in Qur'ān 60:8-9 [75] which allows Asma' bint Abu Bakr to receive a visit and gifts from her mother. Khalida bint al-Aswad, Muhammad's maternal aunt, is referred to in the exegesis on the verse 3:27[76] "Thou bringest forth the dead from the living" in a chapter dealing with Allah's powers and various doubters. The phrase is interpreted as "thou bringest forth the believer from the infidel," because Khalida's father died an unbeliever. One of the

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Prophet's servants, Rawda, is included by Ibn Hajar solely because she was involved in the story Al-Tabarī uses in his explanation of verse 24:27 [77] that requires the believers to announce their presence and greet the residents before entering a house.

The aforementioned are just a few illustrations of Muslim women's contributions to *tafsīr*. In the cases described above, most of the exegesis is connected to verses that specifically refer to women, however there were some interesting cases where there are Muslim women who are linked to verses that do not refer specifically to women.[78]

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Endnotes - Chapter Two

[1] Von Denffer, p. 123.
[2] El-Tayeb, pp. 89-92.
[3] Sahīh Muslim, tr. b. 'Abdul Hamīd Siddīqī, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1975, Vol. IV, p. 1543, K. 40, B. 1232, Hadīth 7147, incl. note 3076. Also see Muslim, Sahīh, Kitāb al-Zuhd wa-l-raqa'iq b. al-tathabbut fi-l-hadīth wa-hukm kitābat al-'ilm.
[4] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 691. Note, 1874. The commentary in this note explains that "if the object of a message is to make things clear, it must be delivered in the language current among the people to whom, the message is sent." (This commentary also verifies the universality of the message of the Qur'ān as discussed in Chapter One.) "There is even a wider meaning for language." It is not merely a question of alphabets, letters, or words. Each age or people – or world in a psychological sense-casts its thoughts in a certain mould or form. Allah's Message – being universal – can be expressed in all moulds and forms, and is equally valid and necessary for all grades of humanity, and must therefore be explained to each according to his or her capacity or receptivity. In this respect the Qur'ān is marvelous. (This also substantiates the uniqueness of the text as discussed in Chapter One: The Reading Process.)
[5] Sahīh Muslim. Vol. IV, 1543, K. 40, B. 1232, Hadīth 7147, incl. note 3076. In note 3076, it states the following: "Those who were thought competent were encouraged to record the words of the Holy Prophet and as a result thereof Ṣaḥifahs of the aḥādīth were compiled."
[6] Gatje, p. 32.
[7] Faruqi, p. 9.
[8] Von Denffer, p. 123.
[9] El Tayeb, pp. 304-306.
[10] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1041.
[11] Smith, pp. 35-37.
[12] Ibn Taymiyyah, p. 7.
[13] Ibn Taymiyyah, p. 7.
[14] Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 21-22, 24-27,29.
[15] Badawi, Series of Interviews on The Science of the Qur'ān, 1982; Tapes 62 & 63. Dr. Jamal Badawi is a professor at St. Mary's University.
[16] Badawi, Series of Interviews on The Science of the Qur'ān, 1982; Tapes 62 & 63. Dr. Jamal Badawi is a professor at St. Mary's University.
[17] al-Ghazali, pp. 92-94.
[18] al-Ghazali, pp. 90-91.
[19] Badawi, Series of Interviews on The Science of the Qur'ān, 1982, tapes 62 & 63.
[20] Faruqi, pp. 4, 9-10.
[21] Von Denffer, pp. 123-134.
[22] Faruqi, p. 5.
[23] Faruqi, pp. 6-9.
[24] Von Denffer, pp. 123-134.
[25] Faruqi, pp. 9-10.
[26] Abdul, pp. 45-53. Also see Faruqi, pp. 10-11.
[27] Faruqi, pp. 10-12. Also see McAuliffe, pp. 54-66.
[28] Faruqi, pp. 3, 11-12.
[29] Faruqi, pp. 11-12. Also see McAuliffe, pp. 54-62.
[30] Abdul, pp. 42-49.
[31] Faruqi, pp. 11-14.
[32] Faruqi, pp. 3, 11.
[33] Faruqi, p. 14-15. Also see Abdul, pp. 49-55.
[34] Faruqi, p. 14.

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[35] Faruqi, p. 14.
[36] Ayoub, p.19.
[37] Smith, pp. 181-217.
[38] Von Denffer, pp. 92-103.
[39] Speight, "Quranic Hermeneutics" p. 80. Also see Shah Waliyullah pp. 67-68. Author states that among those related traditions the ones that pertain to the occasion of revelations are of two kinds. 1. Where an event had taken place in which the faith of the believers and the hypocrisy of the hypocrites had gone under the test as in the Battle of Uhud and Ahzab. There, God in his revelations praised the believers and spoke ill of hypocrites, so that a distinction may be made between the two parties. Subsequently, hints have been given towards those particular events. Hence, it is necessary that some brief explanatory account of these events be given so that the sequence of the speech may become clear to the reader. 2. Where the meaning of the verse is complete in its general application without feeling the need for knowing the event that had become the occasion of revelation. It is the general order the verse that counts and not the particular occasion.
[40] al Bukhārī , Sahīh, tr. b. Khān, Vol. 6, pp. 382-383, Hadīth 411. Also see Speight, p. 69-71.
[41] al Bukhārī , Vol. 6, p. 206, Hadīth 244. The CD-Rom "Mawsā'at al-hadīth al sharīf" published by the Harf and Sakhr Companies in Egypt, version 2.1. Also see Rippins, p. 80.
[42] al Tirmidhī, al-Jāmi' al-sahīh, k. tafsīr al- 'Qur'ān b. wa-min Surat al Zukhruf, hadīth 3176. Also see al-Dārimī, Sunan, Kitab al-muqaddimah, b. ijtināb al-bida 'wa-l-jadal, hadīth 47. Also see Ahmed ibn Hanbal Musnad, hadīth 21143, 21179. This is a hasan hadīth.
[43] al Bukhārī , v. 6, p. 285.
[44] Tirmidhī, k. tafsīr al Qur'ān b. wa-min Surāt Yūnus, hadīth 3031. Also see Ibn Majah, Sunan k. Ta 'bir al-ru'yā b. al-ru'yā al-sālihah yarāhā al-muslim aw turā lahu, hadīth 3888 with a *sahīh isnād.* This hadīth is also given in Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's Musnad with quite a few isnāds, one of which is sahīh, no. 21704. There is another sahīh version in al-Dārimī Sunan, k. al-ru'yā, b. fī qawlihi ta'ālā lahum al bushrā fī-l-hayāh al-dunyā hadīth 2043. All the sahīh versions come from the Companion 'Ubādah ibn al-Sāmit not Abū al-Darda. Also see Rippin, p. 80.
[45] al Bukhārī, v. 6, pp. 204-205, hadīth, 241.
[46] Von Denffer, pp. 92-103. Also see Philips, pp. 237-244, where the author also gives a comprehensive discussion on muhkam and mutashābih verses found in the Qur'ān.
[47] Speight, "Quranic Hermeneutics" p. 69-71.
[48] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., Q 2:106, (cp. 16:101).
[49] Von Denffer, pp. 104-112. Also see Philips, pp. 219-236 author gives similar discussion on *naskh.*
[50] Bewley, p. 8.
[51] Siddiqi, Muhammad Z., p. 116.
[52] Siddiqi, Muhammad Z, p. 116.
[53] Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, hadīth 26046, a *sahīh hadīth.*
[54] al-Disūqī p. 49.
[55] Bukhārī, v. 7, pp. 489-490, hadīth 734.
[56] al-Disūqī, p. 37.
[57] al-Disūqī, p. 43.
[58] Stowasser, p. 85.
[59] Bewley, pp. 8-9. Also see Siddiqi, pp. 117-123.
[60] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 1253, n. 3722.
[61] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1261.
[62] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 1261, n. 3755.
[63] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1261.
[64] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1253, n. 3721.
[65] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 1258-1259.
[66] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 1249-1250, n. 3706.
[67] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 1772-1774, n. 5529-5536.

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[68] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 1251-1252, n. 3708-3717. Also found in *aḥādīth* in Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, *ḥadīth* 26056, also Abu Dāwūd Sunan, hadīth 1893 ck. *al-Talāq, b. fī-l-ẓihar.* A *hasan hadīth.*

[69] Stowasser, p. 102.

[70] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 1703-1704, n. 5330-5337.

[71] Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Musnad hadīth 26056, also Abu Dāwād, Sunan, hadīth, 1893 (k. al-ṭalāq, b. fī-l-ẓihār). A *ḥasan ḥadīth.*

[72]Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 1732-1735, n. 5422-5425.

[73] al-Bukhāri, vol. 3, pp. 547-548, ḥadīth 874.

[74] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1731, n. 5421.

[75] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 1731-1732. Also found in ḥadīth in Bukhari, v. 8, p. 8, ḥadīth 9.

[76] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 147-148, n. 370-372. Also see Roded, p. 27.

[77] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1011, n. 2980.

[78] Roded, p. 27.

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CHAPTER THREE

CLASSICAL TAFSĪR AND THE CONCEPT OF GENDERED WOMAN

In this chapter I will begin the examination of classical *tafsīr of* Qur'ān 4:34. In Chapter Four I will complete the analysis by comparing and contrasting the early *mufassirūn's* commentary on the verse in question, to determine whether *tafsīr* brings clarity or ambiguity to the English translated text. I will use traditional methods of exegesis to analyze traditional *tafsīr*, in contrast to modern methods of exegesis utilized by feminist scholars. Their methodology depends on a range of sources from non-Islamic, to marginal Islamic, to mainstream Islamic sources. As a result their findings tell us that a patriarchal understanding of the Qur'ān is embedded in traditional Qur'ānic exegesis. Because of this they argue traditional exegesis fosters gender relationships that dis-empowers Muslim women. However, based on my research, I found that in the case of the verse under investigation, it is actually the *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* that brings relief for women and limits how the verse is to be applied in reference to the Qur'ānic injunctions on "beating." Further, it is my opinion that the primary role of the classical *tafsīr* was not to the investigate the concept of gendered man nor gendered woman in the Qur'ān, but to explain and amplify the reality and veracity of God's Word to humanity (male and female); so that they may have the right understanding of Who God is, the right understanding of God's guidance to humankind and the right understanding of what God expects of His Creation.

Therefore, my methodology is the traditional one utilized by the early *mufassirūn* themselves, that is to first utilize the original source (Qur'ān), authentic

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aḥādīth, works of early companions and their immediate successors, in order to discover the authentic reception of this text by early Muslim religious authorities. However, before I demonstrate how they explain verse 4:34, I will comment on the methodology employed by some feminist scholars and will briefly discuss the complexities and tension around the use of classical *tafsīr*.

According to some contemporary scholarship, including feminist thought, classical *tafsīr* is quite problematic. This is primarily because most of the exegetical interpretations that have come down were heavily influenced by patriarchal politics emanating from 7th century Arabian society, and later times which were both andocentric and misogynist. As a result it has produced a legacy of reading with no female voice. Also, Muslim men disregard the ethical voice in the Qur'ān that promotes fair treatment of women.[1] For these scholars, classical Qur'ānic exegesis has actually disempowered Muslim women rather than empowered them.

However, it is a proven fact that the Qur'ān came to reform the abuse that was administered to women, and it was the Prophet who was a benefactor for women's rights. At least during the pristine early years of Islam, men radically changed some of their misogynist ways towards women by submitting to God, and following the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Yet, the historical development of *fiqh* later curtailed the original position of Muslim women. They had more rights under the Prophet. This is problematic and I agree that these scholars have raised valid questions concerning Muslim practices towards women, but my argument is not with the questions that are raised around the status of women, but how these questions were investigated. I argue that it is quite

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probable that the models utilized by the feminists to draw these conclusions from the Qur'ān, i.e., that early Muslim scholars manipulated the Qur'ān in order to restrict women may, not be the most appropriate ones to investigate the exegetical works of classical scholars in early Islam. For instance, in reference to the paradigm "feminist hermeneutics of suspicion" employed by some Muslim and non-Muslim female scholars, I found that some of their hermeneutical principles employed to investigate *tafsīr* are based in biblical paradigms from Christian and secular sources. As a result, their findings may be misleading as they relate to investigating Qur'ānic exegesis. It is probable that the hermeneutical conclusions drawn from these methods do not consider the Qur'ānic perspective and perceptions in their investigation. Not only that, some feminist scholars may take as their starting point a denial of the tradition they are studying. Therefore, I see that certain biblical hermeneutic principles, when used to investigate *tafsīr*, may misrepresent the traditional hermeneutical conclusions of the early Muslim exegetes. Amina Wudud in her book, Qur'ān and Woman expounds on these points, she writes:

> [There is a] category of Qur'ānic interpretation concerned with the issue of woman [which] consist primarily of modern scholars' reaction to severe handicaps for woman as an individual and as a member of society which has attribute to the text. In this category are many women and or/ persons opposed to the Qur'ānic message (or more precisely) opposed to Islam... The objectives sought and methods used often come from feminist ideals and rationale. Although they often are concerned with valid issues, the absences of a comprehensive analysis of the Qur'ān sometimes causes them to vindicate the position of women on grounds entirely incongruous with the Qur'ānic position on woman. [2]

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To further substantiate my claim, I also referred to the scholarly research of Muhammad 'Atā-al-Sīd, who compares and contrasts the hermeneutical principles and problems in the Qur'ān and New Testament writings. In his detailed dissertation entitled "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Qur'ān in Islamic History," 'Atā-al-Sīd explains that within the last century, hermeneutics has come to mean the science that deals with the techniques and tools of scriptural exegesis. However, today a new hermeneutics shifts from this meaning to now mean the methodology of understanding. Therefore, the major question of new hermeneutics is how to grasp the reality contained in ancient texts and translate that reality in terms understandable to modern men and women.[3]

With this idea in mind, 'Atā-al-Sīd asserts that there is a striking difference between the two religious traditions as far as hermeneutics is concerned, because of the big gap between each of these religions and its religious thought with its milieu. Consequently, the hermeneutic problem in Islam is different than that of Christianity in that the reality contained in each of the texts is different. According to 'Atā-al-Sīd's work, Muslims believe that the reality contained in Qur'ān (which is the unadulterated word of God Himself) is the oneness of God and His absolute Power and authority. He is the Creator of all, and His creation should worship only Him. The Qur'ān is a book of enlightenment, which guides humankind to this one reality. In other words, the reality that the Qur'ān communicates to humanity is the religious reality that is embedded in the innermost nature of humankind (*fitrah*), that God is one, and we must worship only Him.

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> This is the undisputed fact and universally held understanding by the Islamic *ummah*, and to question this or to assume otherwise, renders the whole discussion irrelevant to the hermeneutical problem in Islam.[4]

However, the reality contained in the Christian text deals with the power and authority of the church and those elements, which constitute the Christian faith.

> Accordingly, it is impossible for a Muslim thinker to think in parallel lines to the hermeneutical principles based from Christian or secular paradigms.[5]

Therefore, it is not probable that a modern scholar, Muslim or non-Muslim, can use new paradigms such as "feminist hermeneutics of suspicion," which are grounded in Christian hermeneutical principles, to investigate the Qur'ān and its exegesis, and expect to deduce accurate conclusions on the understanding of reality that is contained within the Qur'ān.

This Qur'ānic reality is neither open to compromise nor influenced by the temporal. In other words, any time man differs with that reality, it is man's thoughts, which stand to be corrected, and man's understanding to be demythologized. If this is ignored by those who dispute about the Qur'ān and its exegesis without knowledge, guidance, and understanding, it will probably result in faulty deductions. [6]

Another important issue of concern is the fact that Qur'ān is self-laden with certain hermeneutical rules, which are drawn from the very nature of the Qur'ānic *i'jaz*. The exegetes must have the ability to observe however these inherent principles if they are to communicate any understanding of the Qur'ān. However, these rules are not explicitly mentioned as hermeneutical ones, but are contained within the universal messages scattered throughout the Qur'ān declaring God's veracity in the Qur'ān, the

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apostleship of Muhammad, and the guidance to humankind. Furthermore, the Qur'ān has a hermeneutical methodology in communicating this understanding to men. If a firm understanding of this is not achieved, no other part would be properly understood, and the hermeneutical process of the Qur'ān will suffer damage. For example misinterpretation, pitfalls and big gaps of understanding are certain to arise if this methodology is overlooked or not strictly adhered to in any of the Qur'ānic message.

Yet it was the early exegetes who understood these rules and codified them into hermeneutical principles utilized to elucidate and interpret the Qur'ān. Because of this, the early Muslim exegete had the least problems in their excellent grasp of the Qur'ān, and the Qur'ānic hermeneutical methodology was strictly and carefully followed in their understanding. [7]

Another contemporary scholar, Muhammad Asad, translator of the Qur'ān in The Message of the Qur'ān, substantiates the aforementioned conclusions. He states that classical exegetes had unparalleled excellence of Arabic, unwavering belief in God and His Apostle Muhammad. The scholars trusted the intuitive abilities and interpretive traditions of Muhammad as the first hermeneutician to convey the one reality to humankind. They realized that the Qur'ān itself is its own best commentary and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet is next. They approached the Qur'ān with this understanding and reasoning, attempted to interpret and expound on the meaning of the Qur'ān and to interpret each Qur'ānic verse as it was connected with the universal ethical teaching of the text. Yet the early commentators did not claim finality for their own interpretation.[8]

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Based on this evidence, it is my argument that the early scholars were not attempting to manipulate the verse to cause violence to women. They were not concerned with the contemporary gender issues, which we are confronted with today. Nor were they concerned with gendered man or gendered woman, but concerned only with explaining the reality which is contained in the Qur'ān. Part of that reality includes guidance for the best human conduct for both males and females, and the commands to regulate the division of labor between the men and women. For God did not leave it to the consciousness of men to define roles for women. It was He who allocated and differentiated functions, roles and responsibilities for them both. These functions were designed to foster smooth and harmonious operation of the family system.

Subsequently, all the exegetes attempted to elucidate these commands, as they understood them based on their knowledge of the Qur'ān and authentic *aḥādīth*. It is my opinion that they interpreted text based on their God-consciousness (*taqwa*), followed the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, and utilized the hermeneutical principles as employed by the Prophet himself. As a matter of fact, exegesis is often in favor of women, especially in al-Qurtubī's exegesis, which is shown in Chapter Four. Overall, *tafsīrs* similar to Qurtubī's work help to explain the text in a way that brings relief rather than oppression for women. As stated earlier, their main purpose of exegesis was not to focus on investigating the concept of the gendered man or woman, but to relate to humanity (male and female) the understanding of God and His guidance to humankind.

However, I would be amiss not to mention that whereas, the Qur'ān is *qaṭ'ī* or definite, and there are no human mistakes contained in it, the *ḥadīth* (*ḥadīth* is the

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crucial source exegetes used to elucidate on the Qur'ān) is not. It is *ẓanni* or indefinite, except that the *mutawātir* of the *ḥadīth* is *qaṭ'ī* (certain) while the *āhād ḥadīth* is *ẓanni* (merely probable). Nonetheless, those who transmitted and explained the *ḥadīth* were human beings and humans are bound to err in explaining God's word. It is also true that some scholars may have used weak or unauthenticated *ḥadīth* to explain Qur'ānic verses. Since exegesis may be fallible, the interpretation and explanation of the Qur'ān flowing from it could be flawed. Even if the scholars had good intentions, they still may have flawed deductions and inadequate analysis. In order to be objective and analytical, I must note that some of the early scholars used their own opinions and deductions that may be restrictive on women, although the Qur'ān had intended relief for women. Amina Wudud has this to say about classical exegesis.

> What bothers me most about traditional *tafsīr* is that they were exclusively written by males... In the final analysis, the creation of basic paradigms through which we examine and discuss the Qur'ān and Qur'ānic interpretation were generated without the participation and firsthand representation of women. [9]

In addition, according to 'Atā-al-Sīd, many of the serious exegetical problems were caused by the loss of healthy religious sentiments that are the basis of authentic Qur'ānic understanding. After the pristine early years of Islam, some Muslims were prejudiced by sectarian and theological tendencies, which sought to subject the Qur'ān to egoistic influences. The acceptance of fabricated *ḥadīth*, the introduction of foreign elements that are based on totally un-Qur'ānic perspectives, and interpreting the Qur'ān according to them, are some of the main hermeneutical problems found in later *tafsīr*. [10] As a result, some Muslim practices have gone against the equity and justice contained in

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the Qur'ān. But even with this in mind we cannot radically condemn or disregard the traditions because it is necessary for Muslim commentary or exegesis to build upon the *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* in interpreting Qur'ānic verses. If exegesis does not rely upon *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, there will be a loss in understanding the Qur'ānic text as it relates to the inherent corpus meaning of verse 4:34. Further, we need to understand traditional interpretive methods to avoid arriving at radical conclusions about what the Qur'ān and its exegesis tell us about the status of women.

I will conclude this discussion with additional comments on the necessity of traditional interpretative methodology. Throughout my research I realize, as we learn about the sacred text and the proper interpretation of it, we will find that the text deals with both specification and generalization as it relates to its injunctions for Muslims to live by. For example specification is limited to specific content of the text, for example, the slander against A'ishah found in 24:11-13, the Qur'ān specifically exonerates A'ishah from any accusation, yet does not exonerate anyone else. Yet the content of the text also has generalizations, in that it gives an injunction applicable to any slander casein the future. Hence, with applications of the traditional interpretive principles of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, there is a vast amount of accommodation of the specific and general wording in the text. This is extremely important because the application of the appropriate traditional interpretative principles allows for the canons of the Qur'ān to be dealt with in a way that is consistent.[11] Ideally, properly utilizing these traditional interpretive tools enables us to deduce from that which is Divine and apply it to human practice.

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Endnotes - Chapter Three

[1] Ahmad, pp. 67-70.
[2] Wadud, p. 2.
[3] 'Atā-al-Sīd, pp. 66-70.
[4] 'Atā-al-Sīd, p. 362.
[5] 'Atā-al-Sīd, p. 362.
[6] 'Atā-al-Sīd, p. 362.
[7] 'Atā-al-Sīd, pp. 143-147.
[8] Asad, p.vii-viii.
[9] Wadud, p. 2.
[10] 'Atā-al-Sīd, p. 362.
[11] Blankinship, Lecture, 1999.

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CHAPTER FOUR
HERMENEUTICS OF TRUST: CLASSICAL MUFASSIRŪN'S TAFSĪR OF QUR'ĀN 4:34

> *...they (the classical mufassirūn) realized that the Qur'ān itself is its own best commentary and the Sunnah of the Prophet is next. Hence, the early commentators did not claim finality in their own interpretation.* [1]

In this chapter the investigation of this verse 4:34 will be completed by analyzing the Qur'ānic *tafsīr* of some of the classical *mufassirūn* through the centuries since the advent of Islam. Qur'ān 4:34 in its' original language will be examined and explained in detail based on the exegesis of the early Muslim exegetes. The intent is to give more evidence that some of English translations cannot stand alone. It is *tafsīr*, which brings the vital context of translated verse, and helps the reader to clearly understand the intended meaning of God's revelations.

In conventional theological usage, the hermeneutics used by the early scholars of *tafsīr* was the enterprise, which identified the principles and methods prerequisite to the interpretation of the text. It is in this classical sense that the term *tafsīr* will be applied to the exegetical methodology of the early *mufassirūn* of Qur'ānic scholarship. This activity will be referred to as "Hermeneutics of Trust" because, the classical *mufassirūn* loved God and His final Prophet, Muhammad Abdullah and tried to follow the Prophet's *Sunnah* without intentionally desiring to misinterpret what God is really saying. They trusted the intuitive abilities and interpretative traditions of Muhammad as the first hermeneutician to convey the one reality to humankind. To substantiate these points, I will now highlight the qualifications for the *mufassirūn*. Then I will discuss the sources

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of exegesis which they relied on in order to comment on the Qur'ān.

- A traditional *mufassir* is classified as an *'alim* or scholar, and must get *ijāza* or permission in order to comment on the sacred text.
- He must have knowledge of the Qur'ān, its sciences and auxiliary branches. He should have knowledge of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet.
- He should be confident in the Arabic language of the Qur'ān, and understand the unique characteristics of the language.
- He should sincerely search for the messages of the Qur'ānic verses, without allowing his presupposition to distort the meaning of God's words. This is pertaining to those who may have ideas which are diametrically opposed to the very nature of the message of the Qur'ān and are only looking for justification to support their school of thought.
- He should be sincere, not just trying to prove his particular ideology or viewpoint.
- He should have moral integrity, because in Islam there is no distinction between belief and behavior.
- He must have the talents and capabilities to produce quality comprehensive interpretations. [2]

Sources of Exegesis

1. The first source is the explanation of the Qur'ān by the authority of Qur'ān itself. Whenever possible a verse must be related with other verses within the unified message of the entire Qur'ān. This is done by examining the details of one verse by investigating other verses of the Qur'ān which have similar subject matter, and analyzing and studying all of this within the context of the entire Qur'ān. For example, suppose God first revealed a verse that may be ambiguous. Then at a later time He revealed another verse, which explains the verse that came before it. This later verse may be found earlier either in the same chapter or another chapter of the Qur'ān. [3]

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2. Next is the explanation of the Qur'ān by the *Sunnah* or Prophetic tradition. In cases where the Qur'ān does not address a certain issue clearly and there is no other verse to explain it, then the clarity must come from the Prophet's *Sunnah.* Or if the Qur'ān gives very general injunctions, then it is the *Sunnah* that the exegetes refer to for specific and detailed explanations of the general injunction of the Qur'ān. Although one must refer to the Qur'ān as the first source for explaining the Qur'ān, there are some scholars that hold that this second source, the *Sunnah,* goes hand in hand with the first. They assert the position that the Prophet is the sole interpreter of the Qur'ān, because God gave him the inspired ability to interpret the Qur'ān without any mistakes. It was the Prophet who brought *bayinnah* or clarity to the revealed text. He brought this clarity or clear evidence and the *mīzān* or balance by way of his *Sunnah.* Evidence is found in Qur'ān 16:44, 64:

> (We sent them) with Clear Signs
> And Scriptures
> And We have sent down
> Unto thee (also) the Message;
> That thou mayest explain clearly
> To men what is sent
> For them, and that they
> May give thought. Q 16:44
>
> And We sent down the Book
> To thee so that
> That thou shouldst make clear
> To them those things in which
> They differ, and that it should be
> A guide and a mercy
> To those who believe. Q 16:64 [4]

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The significance of these verses is that the exegetes had to depend both on the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* in preserving the authenticity of the text and the meaning of the Qur'ān. [5]

3. Third, there is the explanation of the Qur'ān by the Companions of the Prophet. Actually, these are in the form of traditions traced back to a Companion but not to the Prophet himself. They have thus a lesser but still a considerable authenticity. After the demise of the Prophet, it was his Companions who helped to expound the Qur'ān and its revelation. For example, the Companions often explain the occasions of revelation, which were the historical events that occurred when revelations were revealed. The Companions were living during the 23-year period of the revelation. They experienced how these revelations were applied and utilized by the Prophet in dealing with different aspects of the human condition. [6]

4. The explanation of the Qur'ān by *bi'l ra'y* or opinion. This is not based on mere personal opinion, but rather on *ijtihad* or intellectual deductions based of one's knowledge of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah.* [7]

5. *Tafsīr* of Qur'ān by Classical Arabic. Some scholars contend that since the Qur'ān was revealed in the pure Arabic tongue, then it stands to reason that Arabic is the essential language in interpreting, explaining and understanding God's sacred text. [8]

In Sunni Islam, exegetes depend on the above sources in order to explain the meaning of the text. Sunni Islam is the primary supporter of traditional Qur'ānic

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exegesis. However, Shi'is also used part of the inherited material and recognized Ibn 'Abbās as authority on doctrine. Not to mention that they have their own traditional material in great quantities. Investigation of the work of the Sunni *mufassirūn* has been chosen primarily because the scholars and imams of Philadelphia, being Sunnis, depend on their scriptural authority to handle spiritual, familial, and legal matters in the Philadelphia Muslim *Ummah*. These scholars (*mufassirūn)* are highly respected throughout the Muslim world, because all of them are *'Alims*, have *ijāzahs*, and they meet all the qualifications of *mufassirūn*. The approach of my investigation is as follows:

1. First, brief annotated bibliographies for each *mufassasir* will be related.
2. Second, Qur'ān 4:34, its transliteration and Yusuf Ali's English translation of the meaning of Qur'ān 4:34 will be cited.
3. Third, a paraphrased overview of the classical scholars' commentary on the Qur'ān will be reported. Each discussion begins by addressing some of the aspects or branches of *tafsīr*, then each controversial term is highlighted and addressed. There will be a comparison and contrast of the commentary of each scholar with the other.
4. Fourth, there will be brief comments on those translations, which are considered as exegetical translation.
5. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with comments on some of the modern exegesis of this verse. I will also state what I considered as the most appropriate translation of the meaning of Qur'ān 4:34.

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First Century: 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbās (d.68/686), Tanwir al miqbas.

According to Islamic tradition, Ibn 'Abbās is known as the originator of traditional exegesis, and or the father of exegesis He is called "*Tarjamān* al Qur'ān," – explainer or exegete of the Qur'ān, and the chief authority of *hadīth*. Ibn 'Abbās was definitely the most prominent among the Companions of the Prophet. There are *aḥādīth* to substantiate that the Prophet prayed for Ibn 'Abbās to have the ability to interpret the Qur'ān. The Prophet prayed and made *du'ā* or supplication to God for Ibn 'Abbās to have good understanding of the religion of Islam (*deen).* He asked God to give him *'ilm,* or knowledge and understanding, clarity *(bayyinah)* and perseverance *(sabr)* and confidence, so that Ibn 'Abbās could be exemplary in interpreting the Qur'ān. The Prophet taught him by conveying a series of interpretations. Ibn 'Abbās was of the first century of Islam, which was the first generation of oral interpretation and was known for writing his own commentary. [9]

Third Century: Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Al-Tabarī (d. 310/923), Jāmi' al-bayān wa-ta'wīl āy-al-Qur'ān

During the second generation (*tābi'ūn* generation), the oral interpretation and explanation of the Qur'ān began to be written down. The writing and codification took place during this time. The work of the *tābi'ūn* was the prerequisite for the Ibn Jarīr al Tabarī's (d. 310) exegesis. His work is recognized as the most important work because it was the first complete interpretation of Qur'ān. It consists of 30 volumes that are obtainable today. Al-Tabarī based his writings on the stories of the Sahabas and tabi'un. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al Al-Tabarī is acknowledged as one of the great minds of his era. His written legacy includes two fundamental works of Islamic scholarship. The first is a history of the world as he knew it, entitled Ta'rikh al-Rusul Wa'l Muluk, and the second is his commentary on the Qur'ān, Jāmi' al-bayān wa-ta'wīl āy-al-Qur'ān, which I have used for an explanation of 4:34. This later work ushers in the classical period of Islamic exegetical activity, which contained the compilation and methodical arrangement of the first two and a half centuries of Muslim exegesis.

In his *tafsīr*, al-Tabarī preserves a wealth of exegetical tradition going back to the earliest writers. For example, his *tafsīr* includes repetition of *aḥādīth* reported on the authority of the Prophet, the *sahabah* and the *tabi'ūn.* Al-Tabarī gives the various chains of transmission and evaluates them. His work is judged as an important example of *tafsīr bi'l ma'thur,* although it does contain some reports later adjudged to be weak. Tabarī's contribution to development of Qur'ānic hermeneutical theory includes classification of the *muhkam* (clear, explicit) verses from the *mutashabih* (ambiguous not clear implied) verses. This work is more than just a collection and compilation of

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the extant exegetical material because al-Tabarī adds his own comments. His work is prefaced with a comprehensive introduction, which discusses hermeneutical considerations. [10]

Seventh Century: Abu'Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al Ansari Al-Qurtubī (d. 671/1273), al-Jami'li ahkam al-Qur'ān.

Muhammad ibn Ahmad Abu 'Abdullah al-Qurtubī although belonging to the Maliki school of jurisprudence, presents different opinions without polemic and at times disagrees with the Maliki school. His *tafsīr*, al-Jami' li-ahkam al-Qur'ān, is an encyclopedic work combining *hadīth* with popular piety, jurisprudence, and linguistic considerations. It is well organized and extremely usable. [11]

Seventh Century: 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar al-Baydawi (d.687/1291), Anwar al Tanzil wa Asrar al Tawil.

Al-Baydawi was a Shāfi'i judge in Shiraz, Iran. He is most famous for his widely used commentary on the Qur'ān, Anwar al-tanzil, which he largely abridged from the earlier linguistic *tafsīr* of al-Zamakhshari (467-538/1075-1144) in order to make the latter coincide with the Sunni perspective. Al-Baydawi also added material of his own. His *tafsīr*, which was mostly linguistic, was attractive to European Orientalists, who were often uncertain of their command of the Arabic language. The pervasiveness of the use of al-Baydawi's commentary among the Orientalists in an earlier age gave the work more prominence in comparison to other *tafsīrs* than it deserved. For, although it is certainly acknowledged as an acceptable *tafsīr*, it is no substitute for more detailed and comprehensive works like those of al-Tabarī and al-Qurtubī. Certain sections of this *tafsīr* have been translated into English, but not the commentary on 4:34. [12]

Eighth Century: Ismail ibn Umar Abu-'l-Fida Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) *Tafsīr* al-Qur'ān al-'azim.

At his birth, four centuries had passed since the death of al-Al-Tabarī (d. 310/923). According to research, Ibn Kathīr entered in the first years of the 8th/14th -century having seen the maturation of the major forms of Qur'ānic exegesis by the following exegetes: al-Tusi (d. 460/1067), al-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144), Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1209), and Ibn 'Arabi (d. 638/1240) who, however, has no proper *tafsīr*. All these scholars had an impact on his exegesis. Ibn Kathīr, in his work, shows some rejection of their use of exegesis by opinion. Actually, all four of these scholars were opposed to Ibn Kathīr's own philosophy of *tafsīr* which was far more influenced by al-Tabarī and by his mentor, Ibn Taymiyyah (b. 661/1262 – d. 728/1328), the Hanbali theologian and jurisconsult. Thus, Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr al Qur'ān al 'Azim is categorized as Tafsīr bil-Mathur. [13]

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Fourteenth Century: Sayyid Qutb (d. 1386/1966) Fi zilal al Qur'ān.

Sayyid Qutb, was an Egyptian thinker of the Muslim Brotherhood. His *tafsīr* is distinguished by his conscious effort to remain within the purview of the Qur'ān. He is known for his command of the Arabic language, and his sparing use of tradition; all but the most widely accepted *ḥadīth* are omitted. He is known for his own view of Islam as a religious system and its relationship to other systems and ideologies. Thus, his expositions of Islam and society, Islam and theology, Islam and the state, are made from within a given dogma. They are declarative, not apologetic. His *tafsīr*, Fi Zilal al-Qur'ān is for today's Muslim youth, both *Shi'a* and *Sunni*. [14]

Arabic Text of Qur'ān 4:34 [15]

ٱلرِّجَالُ قَوَّٰمُونَ عَلَى ٱلنِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ ٱللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ
وَبِمَآ أَنفَقُوا۟ مِنْ أَمْوَٰلِهِمْ ۚ فَٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتُ قَٰنِتَٰتٌ حَٰفِظَٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا
حَفِظَ ٱللَّهُ ۚ وَٱلَّٰتِى تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَٱهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِى
ٱلْمَضَاجِعِ وَٱضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۖ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا۟ عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ
ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

Transliteration of Qur'ān 4:34

Ar-rijālu qawwāmūna 'alā-n-nisā'i bimā faḍḍala-llāhu ba'ḍahum 'alā bad'ḍin wa-bimā anfaqū min amwālihim. Fa-ṣ-ṣālihātu qānitātun ḥāfiẓātun li-ghaybi bimā ḥāfiza-llāhu. Wa-llātī takhāfūna nushūzahunna fa-'iẓūhunna wa-hijurūhunna fī-l-maḍji'i wa-dribūhunna. Fa'in aṭa'nakum fa-lā tabghū 'alayhinna sabīlan. Inn-llāha kāna 'Aliyyan Kabīrā. [16]

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English Translation of the Meaning of Qur'ān 4:34

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose art ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance): for God is Most High, Great (above you all). [17]

Sabab al-Nuzūl or Occasion of Revelation of Qur'ān 4:34

All of the *mufassirūn* whom I consulted except for Ibn 'Abbās cited the occasion of revelation, and were unanimous in regard to the events and place of the revelation of Qur'ān 4:34. The scholars agreed that this ayah came because during the Battle of Uhud, in the 4th year of the Hijrah, the wife of one the jurists (*fuqaha'*) committed the act of *nushūz* (she would not grant her husband conjugal rights) so he struck her. Her father went to the Prophet and explained the incident. And the Prophet instructed him to take the retribution and hit him back.[18] However, the Prophet had to amend his statement, because the angel Gabriel came to the Prophet and told him that God has revealed something better.

Therefore, the Prophet said to the father that he wanted to do something, but God revealed something better. Hence, this *ayah* negated the first ruling, that is, for the wife to hit him back. This *ayah* which was revealed before Qur'ān 4:34 states: "And do not rush with the Qur'ān before its revelation comes to you (Qur'ān 20:114)," that is to say, do not say anything that people can take as a rule before you get revelation from

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God."[19]

The occasion of revelation is significant because it helps the reader to understand the intent and meaning of verse 4:34 within its original context. This tradition clarifies the events and circumstances, which are connected to 4:34, such as illustrating how the Prophet responded to the situation and how his ruling was abrogated or negated by verse 20:114. Hence, this occasion of revelation helps to shed light on the historical milieu of the Prophet and the development of the early Muslim community specifically regarding to the division of labor between men and women.

Based on the fact that this verse, Qur'ān 4:34 was revealed in connection with the Battle of Uhud, the scholars agreed that it was revealed in Medina.

Method of Elucidation

The *mufassirūn* followed the traditional method of expounding on Qur'ān 4:34. The majority of them utilized several exegetical *aḥādīth* to explain God's revelation. Most of their work is classified as *bi'l ma'thur*. Al-Tabarī and other classical *mufassirūn's* work is dominated by *aḥādīth*, while Ibn 'Abbās did not refer to any *aḥādīth*. It appears that his *tafsīr* is strictly his own commentary. Sayyid Qutb rejected all but the most widely accepted *hadīth*. He was an independent *mufassir* who used *ijtihād*, or intellectual deductions based on his knowledge and intelligent analysis of the Qur'ān and the authentic *aḥādīth*.

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Classical Mufassirūn's *Tafsīr* of Qur'ān 4:34

Objective of Qur'ān 4:34

The majority of the *mufassirūn* agreed that the primary focus of this verse is concerned with allocation and differentiation of roles and responsibilities to men and women in general. For them it is God who has defined the division of labor between men and women, including domestic relations between man and wife. Sayyid Qutb, who viewed the role of Islam as coordinating the spiritual and socio-political individual and collective life, understood this verse as legislative of functional relationships between man and husband (protector and provider), and woman and wife (mother of children). He explains this verse as referring to the division of labor – for men and women in general – and states that is equitable for both the male and female. Qutb states that God revealed 4:34 because it makes males and females become more conscious of how, why, and what they were created to do. This verse makes them reflect on their nature. The roles, responsibilities and the division of labor discussed in this verse are not outside the nature of women nor men. The injunctions or commands in this verse are not oppressive primarily because they are befitting to the nature of men and women. [20]

However another *mufassir*, al-Tabari, whose work is categorized as *tafsīr bil-ma'thur*, explains that this verse is primarily concerned with domestic relations between husbands and wives. The main point in his *tafsīr* is that the words "because God has endowed the one with more / preferred some of them over others" refers to men's economic ability to support their wives and the concomitant obligation to do so.[21]

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Yet, in the first part of this verse, the emphasis is on the statement that men are responsible for the protection of women in general. It is interesting to note that God begins this verse with *Ar-rijālu qawwāmūna 'alā-n-nisā'i*, (men are maintainers and protectors of women). God did not say that *al'azwaj qawwāmūna 'alā azwajah, (*and husbands are maintainers of their wives). The emphasis is on men in general not just husbands.

For a further explanation, the Arabic term *rijāl* is presented. This term is derived from *rlj*, the root for both foot and foot soldier. The foot is a highly structured and extremely strong part of the anatomy. It provides balance, support, and mobility to the entire body. The foot soldier endures rigorous training to prepare himself to confront danger with skill, courage, and foresight. He obeys his commander in chief to whom he has pledged his *bay'at* or loyalty and allegiance. The foot soldier has accepted the trust or responsibility to carry out duties that protect those who are entrusted to his care. It is his role to establish and maintain security, which will lead to peace harmony and prosperity. To substantiate this, Islam tells us that Muslim men are required to follow the example of the Prophet as a *qawwām;* he was responsible for the welfare of women. He was the benefactor for the early Muslim women's rights. He treated them with kindness.

In addition, the Prophet protected women and safeguarded them from harm. Therefore, the companions and the men in the first Muslim community (*ummah*) took care of women. The Prophet did not organize women for war (*jihad*) (although some of the women did fight) he ordered that women be safeguarded from any confrontations.

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Thus, men in general, husbands, *imams* and *amirs* are supposed to be servants for the community. This includes taking care of all women whatever their marital status. Therefore, men in the role of foot soldiers must meet certain qualifications.[22] Those qualifications allow them to have the status of *qawwāmūna.*

There are several English translations of God's meaning of *qawwāmūna* i.e., those responsible, protectors, maintainers, supporters, in charge of, taking full care of, and lords of women. The Arabic words *qayyām, qayyīm,* or *qawwām,* are derivatives of the verb *qāma, yaqūma,* meaning to stand up. These derived words stand for a person who thus stands up for and is responsible for the correct conduct (*adab*), safety, and maintenance of the affairs of an individual, institution, and or an organization. Hence, man as *qawwām* is governor, director, protector and manager of the affairs of women. Another definition denotes a person who holds the responsibility or has the duty and charge to manage a job, or run a system, or to take care of what has to be done.[23]

In classical *tafsīr,* the *mufassirūn* give the following commentary around the concept *qawwāmūna.* Ibn 'Abbās comments that men are responsible for maintaining women.[24] Al-Baydawi begins his *tafsīr* by giving the qualification of *qawwāmūna.* In doing so, he compares the role men overseeing women with that of a governor overseeing his flock, people, or country.[25] Al-Qurtubī reports *qawwāmūna* are those who take care of women and care for their welfare, because men are rulers (*hakams*), leaders ('a*mirs*), and those who go into battles (*ghazis*). He further explains, God is the one who has defined our respective roles, responsibilities and has endowed us with the innate ability to do so by way of our natural disposition (*fiṭrah*).[26]

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Classical *tafsīr* tells us God has mandated that certain conditions must be met regarding the status of *qawwāmūna* because God says in the second part of the first line: *bimā faḍḍalal-laahu ba'dhahun 'alā ba' dhinw-wa bimā 'anffaquu min 'am-waalihim.* Some of the exegetes explain the Arabic term *faḍḍala* as meaning God favors or prefers, or men have a degree (*darajah)* over women because of what they have inherited from Him (increased inheritance so that they may live up to their responsibility) and what they spend of the wealth. For instance, al-Baydawi explains that "men have one thing or something, which is inherited, and the other is what they earn; that is, men must go out and earn a livelihood so they will maintain and protect their family."[27]

Ibn 'Abbās says that men get extras in their share in booty and inheritance. He is of the opinion that extras also mean qualities such as logic of mind and overall proper order of things (*adab*). His commentary suggests, that generally speaking, men have a degree over women in regard to their inner and outer strength, so that they may indeed function in the capacity of their God- given role as *qawwāmūna.* To him, it is mandatory that the *qawwām* has a higher level of action or work performance than a woman, so that he not only provides physical or material maintenance but emotional and spiritual maintenance as well. With these provisions, he is able to set the example and the standards (*adab*) to which the family should adhere.[28] For the man, his status as *qawwām* begins at the time of contracting the marriage, because it is incumbent upon him to give the dower (*mahr*), to the woman. The *mahr* is a gift, either a sum of money or other form of property to which the wife becomes entitled by marriage. *Mahr* is one

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of the pecuniary rights of a wife established in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* and on which there is consensus (*ijma*) among the Muslims. [29]

In reference to maintenance (*nafaqah*), this is what men must spend from their inheritance and lawful earnings to provide what is incumbent upon them. *Nafaqah* according to Shari'ah represents all those things which are essential to human life. It means food, clothing, and shelter. The schools of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) concur that a wife's maintenance is obligatory (*wajib*) in all three forms. They also concur that the determination of maintenance is in accordance with the financial status of the man as expressed in the Qur'ān, 65:5-6. [30] It reads in part:

> Lodge them where you are lodging, according to your means...
> Let the man of plenty expend out of his plenty, ...As for him who has his means of subsistence straitened, let him expend of what God has given him. God does not burden anyone except to the extent of what He has granted him... [31]

This verse also stresses the significance of a man's responsibility even to his wife in probationary period (*'iddah*) before a divorce becomes final. The wife must be provided for on the same scale as he is according to his status in life.

Furthermore, Ibn 'Abbās agrees that maintenance is incumbent upon men and not women. Men are responsible for the overall welfare of women.[32] Sayyid Qutb says men are created with this degree or responsibility because they are mandated by God to bring relief to their women or helpmates.[33]

Ibn Kathīr and al-Baydawi interpret this part of the verse as meaning, men have a greater right over women, and are elevated over them because men have more excellence than women.[34] Subsequently, Ibn Kathīr relates that women should obey

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their husbands in everything. He infers that God made it so that the husband's right over her is that it is obligatory (w*ajib*) for her to obey him at all times. It is prohibited *(haram)* to disobey him. [35] He uses the following *ḥadīth* to justify his position.

> Abu Hurayrah narrated that, God's messenger said, If I were to order anyone to prostrate himself before another, I would have ordered a woman to prostrate herself before her husband.[36]

Yet this is problematic without explanation. One would deduce from this that men have absolute power and authority over women. However, the commentary on this *ḥadīth*, (which Ibn Kathīr did not include in his work) does not support his claim that men have excellence and absolute power and authority over women. The commentary merely emphasizes that a man has certain rights over his wife, and it is important that she grants him these rights within her capacity to do so. A husband cannot order his wife to disobey God.[37]

Ibn Kathīr's explanation of this verse is not clear at all. It certainly is not applicable to how God intended for women to be treated. Ibn Kathīr's commentary definitely does not express how the Prophet treated his wives. Although Ibn Kathīr also refers to the Prophet's farewell address, in which he tells men to treat women with kindness, and to give women their rights for provisions, food, shelter and to clothe them,[38] his commentary actually nullifies kind treatment, mercy and fairness to women, which is clearly expressed by what the Prophet did, said and agreed upon. It is quite probable that his commentary could be used by men to oppress women rather than as a mandate that they as *qawwāmūna* are responsible for the care, protection and overall maintenance and well-being of their wives.

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To substantiate these points, I found that certain lines of Ibn Kathīr's *tafsīr* on Qur'ān 4:34 is translated into English in the book, The Righteous Wife, by Muhammad Shoomaan and this translation has negatively influenced how some African American Muslims interpret and apply this verse. The Righteous Wife is widely circulated within the African American Muslim community and it is frequently recommended that African American Muslim women should read this book. The translation of Ibn Kathīr's *tafsīr* reads in part:

> The man is in charge (*qayyim*) of the woman, i.e., he is the one in-charge of her, her chief, the one having authority over her and the one who corrects her if she inclines away from what is correct.[39]

This translation is accepted by some African American Muslim men as an accurate rendering of the Arabic verse 4:34, hence they believe that they have authority over African American Muslim women. Further, some spouses claim that their wives should obey them in all things. This is problematic because this translation is often times used to restrict women. Moreover, since certain parts of Ibn Kathīr's *tafsīr* is translated into English, it actually has more influence than al-Baydawi and al-Tabari *tafsīrs* on the gendered position of African America Muslim women.

Nonetheless, like Ibn Kathīr, al-Tabarī also emphasizes that men have authority because they are charged by God to give dowers and to spend of their wealth as the breadwinners so that they may financially maintain their family. Because of this responsibility, they are allowed the right and authority to discipline and force women in keeping their duty to God and to them. However, if married to non-Muslim women, this does not apply, since these latter are not required to adhere to Islamic law.[40]

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There are some classical scholars who hold that men do not have the privilege of this status or a degree over women primarily because of their biological nature, but rather that men are charged by God with this position (*qawwāmūna*) in order to make men responsible not just for their wives but for their children as well. This is necessary so that the children are legitimate. This is quite plausible because there is evidence that suggested that pre-Islamic Arabia was predominantly a matrilineal society in which paternity was of little or no importance. The child exclusively belonged to the mother or the mother's tribe.

Polyandrous and polygamous arrangements were prevalent under tribal law. Consequently, in many situations, the case of paternity was unknown. Islam brought new religious elements, which changed the society from matrilineal to patrilineal. The society also shifted from tribal law to Islamic law. Marriage was legalized and became a legitimate institution.[41] Marital relations were now governed by Qur'ānic verses such as 4:34, which makes the child belong partly to the father. In other words, the Islamic structure of marriage was arranged in such a way that the father's paternity is known in order to make him responsible for his children.[42] And passages such as 2:233 stress that the interest of the child must be secure and safeguarded by the father even in times of divorce. It reads in part:

> ...and on the child's father (the husband) is their food and clothing... [43]

This makes the father as responsible for the child as the mother. These verses and others scattered throughout the sacred text support the need for a non-oppressive patrilineal system. Moreover, there is a large body of fiqh defining the man's responsibility to his children. They tell us that men, husbands and fathers (*qawwāmūna*) should be responsible not only for females, wives, and mothers, but also for children. Men should be actively

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involved in children's lives. The whole thrust of Islam is to have legitimacy in the familial structure because the family is central to Islam. It is the cornerstone of the *ummah*. And the *ummah* must have legitimacy because it is the social and political order of Islam.

In contrast to the above commentary, some classical scholars say that the phrase "God has preferred some over the other" is ambiguous because it does not specifically state whom He prefers. To them, this ambiguity may indicate some women are preferred over men. In regard to preference, it should be neither biological nor arbitrary. Preference should be based on behavior and action. For example, God prefers those who are in *jihad*, or struggle in the way of God to establish and maintain the self-perpetuating, believing family. If men do not assert this high level of work, performance there is no preference for them.

On the contrary, if a woman is in *jihad*, that is raising the children and maintaining the family and the home by herself, then she is a *mujihad* (one who struggles.) In such a case, she would be preferred over the man. To these scholars, the concept of *qawwāmūna* are those people, males and females, who establish the *deen* of Islam in the family and society at large. To them, the terms *rijālu* and *qawwāmūna* are synonymous with the concept of vicegerent (believing men and women are custodians of the earth and all are responsible for propagating Islam).[44]

Another interesting reinterpretation of the verb *faḍḍala* (to prefer) is by Maysam al-Faruqi, author of "Women's Self-Identity in Islam". She views *faḍḍala* not as favor or preference but maintains that best usage is to refer to *faḍḍala* as providing sustenance.

The Arabic term *faḍl* is sustenance from God, which is used throughout the Qur'ān. For her the verse is saying "God did provide the one (men with something over

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what He provides the others (women.)" Her usage of *faḍḍala* is similar to that of Ibn 'Abbās who said, "God did provide men with extra which he did not give to women." Like Ibn 'Abbās, al-Faruqi states the extra provision that God gave to men is not in superiority but in inheritance, so that men are financially responsible for their female relatives. Men shall be responsible for women using that which God has provided to them over what He has provided to women (inheritance), and that which they spend of their own means (*nafaqah*). Maintenance (*nafaqah*) in a legal sense signifies all those things, which are essential to support human life – food, clothing, and shelter. Maintenance is one of the fundamental responsibilities of the husband or father, and is the fundamental right of the wife and mother. She holds that you must understand this verse along with verse 4:32, [45] which reads in part:

> And do not covet the favors that Allah has bestowed (*faḍḍala*) on some of you who excel the others. Men shall have a share of the fruits of their labor and women shall have a share of the fruits of their labor.[46]

Similar to her understanding, all of the classical *mufassirūn* agree that it is based on the prescribed maintenance that husbands provide for their wives and that the wives should show them gratitude. In regard to this God talks about two types of women and how they differ in their treatment towards their husbands. The first type of woman that God describes is the *qānitāt*. And what does God say about the *qānitāt*? God says in the next line:

Fa-ṣ-ṣālihātu qānitātun ḥāfiẓātun li-ghaybi bimā ḥāfiza-llāhu.

Ibn 'Abbās explains *qānitāt* as righteous women who believe in and love God. They submit to God and obey Him in the unseen. They are kind to their husbands, obey

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them and guard the secrecy of private and intimate life (*al ghayb).*[47] However, this is not confined to women, but is applicable to men as well. In Muslim *ḥadīth* Abu Sa'id Khudri reported that God's messenger said:

> The most important of the trusts in the sight of God on the Day of Judgment is that a man goes to his wife and she goes to him (and the breach of this trust is) that he should divulge her secret.[48]

To continue with the social functions of women, Ibn 'Abbās contends they should take care of themselves and their husband's property and money. He extends his discussion by saying the wife should be grateful for her husband's provisions and treat him with kindness. She should acknowledge and respect his position of *qawwām.* She should understand that his status as *qawwām* is limited only to the one inalienable right that he has over her and that is legitimate, exclusive sexual access. She should also respect her own status as *qānitah* out of piety and gratitude to God and willingly grant him his right.[49] Ibn 'Abbās talks about the word piety or righteousness as a necessary condition in Islam, in that the woman believes in and adheres to the articles of faith. He further asserts that the wife should willingly perform the pillars of Islam as a way to demonstrate her love and gratitude for God's provision (*rizq*). This includes her husband and his overall maintenance for his family.[50] In support of what God says in this verse, prophetic tradition tells us that the *qānitah* is a guardian in her husband's house:

> Narrated Ibn Umar: The Prophet said, "All of you are guardians and are responsible for your wards. The ruler is a guardian and the man is a guardian of his family; the lady is guardian who is responsible for her

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husband house and his offspring; and so all of you are guardians of your wards."[51]

With this in mind, al-Qurtubī relates, regarding righteous women, husbands should automatically treat them with kindness, because there is no reason to admonish them. If the man executes his position as *qawwām* to oppress the wife, then he has transgressed. But if a husband treats his wife with kindness and provides for her, and she accepts his *nafaqah*, yet she has odd behavior, shows dislike, disgust or even hatred towards her husband and refuses to grant him his right, she is in the state of *nushūz*. [52] Then what does God say about the *nashizah* or disobedient woman? In the next line of this verse, God says:

> As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill conduct, *(Wa-llātī takhāfūna nushūzahunna)*... then admonish them (*fa-'iẓūhunna)*, and (next) separate their bed *(wa-hijurūhunna fī-l-madjī'i)* and (last) *chastise* them, hit lightly with siwak *(wa-dribūhunna)*

The Arabic word *nushūz*, (a verbal noun), like the word *qawwāmūna*, is given several meanings in English translations such as, rebellion, disobedience, recalcitrance, contempt, arrogance, refractoriness and elevation. The scholars of *fiqh* concur, that concerning the wife, the term revolves around the following meanings:

-The wife does not perform her religious duties.

-She leaves the house without the husband's permission.

-She denies her husband his one inalienable right without due cause.

-The wife is suspected of adultery.

-She does not beautify herself. [53]

The scholars of *fiqh* contend a *nashizah* wife is not entitled to

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maintenance. However, they differ regarding the extent of *nushūz* that causes maintenance to cease. According to the *Ḥanafī* school of law, Imam Abū Ḥanīfah argues that if a wife leaves her house without her husband's permission, this act of disobedience will cause her maintenance to stop. However, if she denies him his conjugal rights, it shall not cause her maintenance to stop. His view is contrary to all other schools of thought. They all agree that if a wife denies her husband his right without any legal, medical or reasonable excuse, she is considered *nashizah* and shall not be entitled to maintenance.[54]

Additionally, the schools of *fiqh*, agree that the act of *nushūz* is not solely confined to women.[55] They based their evidence on Qur'ān 4:128 which reads in part:

> ...if a wife fears cruelty (*nushūzan*) or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange amicable settlement between them.[56]

In this verse *nushūzan* is a verb which bears the basic physical meaning to stand up or in our expression to stand up to as to resist. According to the jurists, martial discord (*nushūz*) is caused by the husband's despotic behavior towards his wife. The scholars agree the husband commits the act of *nushūz* when he demonstrates some or all of the following behavior:

-The husband hates his wife.

- He transgresses against her by beating, harming, reviling, abusing her or not treating her with kindness.
- He elevates himself over his wife.
- He does not maintain her.

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- He refuses her in the bed.

- He does not speak to her.

- He causes her harm. [57]

It is interesting to note that none of these jurists mentioned the preventive measures against *nushūz* revealed in Qur'ān 4:34. With regard to this I will continue with what the *mufassirūn* say about *nushūz* and how to correct it.

Ibn 'Abbās explains *nushūz* as merely meaning refusal of conjugal relations.[58] The other *mufassirūn* explain that *nushūz* takes place when a wife leaves home without her husband's consent, objects to intimacy or commits any act of defiance of God and then of their husband. Al-Tabarī adds to this explanation by stating, to fear *nushūz* means that a husband is suspicious of the wife because her behavior has changed, she does not take his right seriously, she disrespects and disregards his status of *qawwāmūna*. Thus, she elevates or towers over her husband. She does whatever she desires without any regard for spouse. If this takes place, God has prescribed the following corrective measures:

1. Admonish them by reminding that Allah is not pleased with them (*fa-'iẓūhunna*); and if that does not work then do step number two.

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2. Separate from the bed *(wa-hijurūhunna fī-l-madjiʿi wah)* and if that does not work then apply number three.
3. Hit them with *miswāk* and God knows best (*wa-dribūhunna)*[59]

All of the *mufassirūn* agree on the meaning of the first step *fa-ʿiẓūhunna.* They concur that if the wife leaves the bed, the first thing a husband should do is to advise her by reminding her of God. Then the husband should remind his wife of her Islamic duties, marital rights and responsibilities. Then he should advise her to return to the bed. If she obeys him, then he is to leave her alone; there is to be no further reprimand.

They also agree that if the wife still refuses, as the second step the husband should separate himself from her bed. However, some of the commentators differ with regard to the meaning of separating from the bed (*hajr*). For instance, Ibn ʿAbbās states that *hajr* does not mean physically separating from the bed or the room nor does it mean for the husband to sleep on the floor. Making *hajr* means to separate yourself from your wife while you are still in the bed, which means to turn your back on her. He continues to explain by saying that the husband should not look at or talk to her. In other words, the husband should ignore the wife in order to help change her behavior.[60] For Ibn ʿAbbās this is an effective method because most women cannot bear to be ignored. Based on Ibn ʿAbbās' commentary, it appears that turning the back is more symbolic, for it is more a psychological maneuver than an actual physical move. It may be a form of humiliation.

Ibn ʿAbbās includes in his commentary, if the wife grants her husband's right, then the husband should not ask for more than that. Even though his wife may not love

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him, yet still grants him his right, then he should be grateful. Husbands should not command any more than that. Men do not have any control over whether their wives show love to them or not. Nevertheless, it is the right of the husband to request intimacy from their wives. It is the responsibility of wives to oblige them if they are able. Therefore, when wives keep their duty first to God, then to their husbands, they should not be treated badly or disrespectfully. If wives do not fornicate with anyone in their husband's absence or at any time, or commit sin with someone whom they may really love, then their husbands should treat them with kindness. As long as the wives do not behave in the manner discussed above, husbands should take good care of their wives.[61]

In regard to the aforementioned discussion, Ibn 'Abbās' elaboration on love and emotion was quite useful in aiding understanding of the woman's responsibility to her husband. Husbands cannot control their wives' emotions. Men cannot force women to love them or vice versa. However, if their wives treat them with kindness and willingly come to their bed, their wives cannot be forced to do more than that.[62] In reference to Ibn 'Abbās' explanation about not having control over one's love for another, one can refer to the Prophet's married life. Based on Islamic tradition, I found that all of the Prophet's wives knew of his love for his third wife A'ishah. And she knew that before her, his real love was for his first wife, the late Khadijah.[63] None of his wives, including 'A'ishah, could control his emotions. Although there was some jealousy, this matter did not interfere with their responsibility to their husband and their fulfilling the one right that he had over them, marital fidelity.

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In contrast to Ibn 'Abbās' exegesis of the concept of *hajr*, al-Tabarī uses traditions which tell us that the *hajr* is a physical act. The husband must physically leave the bed or room and not communicate with the wife. He uses *aḥādīth* that advise the husband to separate from the bed and to not talk to her but still to have intercourse. Similar reports state that the husband should talk to the wife in a disrespectful way, leave the bed, and yet still have intercourse.[64] Neither of these reports had further explanation or commentary. Al-Tabarī did not cite corrections or indications that the traditions were weak and cannot be taken literally. Also, al-Qurtubī and before him Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī severely criticized al-Tabarī for supporting this interpretation. As they stand these reports are strange and quite ambiguous and if taken literally can be used to cause oppression for women.

Al-Qurtubī agrees that *hajr* is a physical act but he expands his explanation to include time periods and limitations in applying the act of *hajr*. He is the only *mufassir* to explain the time limits placed on these reprimands according to Qur'ān 2:226-227. The verses read as follows:

> For those who take
> An oath for abstention
> From their wives,
> A waiting for four months
> Is ordained;
> If then they return,
> Allah is Oft-forgiving,
> Most Merciful, Q 2:226
>
> But if their intention
> Is firm for divorce,
> Allah heareth
> And knoweth all things. Q 2:227. [65]

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These verses actually set the time limit relating to *hajr*. The Qur'ānic injunction is called *īlā'* and tells us; if a man refuses to have anything to do with his wife for four months, the judge (*Qadi*) must compel him to return to her or to divorce her. Al-Qurtubī also renders that according to the consensus (*ijma)* of the *ulama*, the time period for separating from the bed may be from one month to no more than four months. Their evidence is based on the tradition of the Prophet, which tells us that due to disturbance in his household he retired from all of his wives for approximately one month. [66] The content of this includes Q 33:28-29 and 66:5, as discussed in Chapter Two.

If this does not result in modification of behaviors, then most of the exegetes agreed to apply the final step, *wa dribuū-hunna,* or hit with *miswāk*. However according to this *tafsīr*, the hit must not be harsh, nor should it bruise the wife. Al-Qurtubī points out that hitting in this verse is the type used in raising a child and it is not to be used to cause harm. He infers that all that is meant by hitting is to bring peace and right order (*adab*) in the family structure; it is not considered punishment.[67]

Al-Qurtubī cites another *ḥadīth* that discusses an incident between Umar and his wife. He points out that, "Umar first advised his wife, then he separated from her for approximately one month up to three months, and then he hit her." Along with this discussion, al-Qurtubī cites another tradition, which reports that Umar said that the Prophet stated, "no man should be questioned as to why he beats his wife."[68] I found that this is a weak *ḥadīth*, which is not valid as proof in Islamic law. [69]

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Al-Qurtubī also mentions in his *tafsīr* that al-Tabarī also includes weak *ḥadīth* in his commentary. One reads as follows, "a Muslim hit his wife because she went out of the house late at night, so he tied her up and beat her. The wife complained to her father, who told his daughter to be patient because her husband was good and that her husband may be her husband in paradise."[70] This is a strange or weak *ḥadīth*, which is deduced from the tradition, "Trust in Allah and tie your camel" – the narrator seems to have assumed that it meant to tie your wife up and beat her. However, al-Qurtubī points out that a Muslim judge (*Qadi*) argued that a man with God consciousness (*taqwa*), especially a scholar of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah (alim)*, would not interpret this tradition this way.[71]

Al-Qurtubī also includes a *ḥadīth* which reads in part: "*ittaqū Allah fī al-nisā'*" or "fear Allah regarding your women for you have taken them as an *amanah* or trust from Allah and have had intercourse with them by the word of Allah. And they (the women) have to follow the rule that they will not put anyone in your beds whom you dislike, and if they do that beat them lightly."[72]

Along with the aforementioned commentary, Qutb gives some additional comments on the reprimands mentioned in the previous discussion. He refers to these reprimands as preventive measures. He focuses on the signs of *nushūz*, not *nushūz* itself.[73] He states, "if *nushūz* really takes place, precautions and admonishments in this verse will be of no consequence. Further, for a *nashizah* woman, who really unjustifiably hates her husband, or is disgusted with him, separating from her bed and not touching her, would have no consequence for her. Qutb infers that based on her behavior, such a

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wife has no desire to be kind, loving, and intimate to her husband in the first place. As well, any attempt to use these steps to correct the actual act of *nushūz* itself will inevitably result in a battle or "war between the sexes."

Qutb observes that *nushūz* is an emotional act; it is not a physical act such as not cooking, not cleaning, or neglecting to perform other household chores. Therefore, he stresses in his work that if the husband notices a change in the wife's behavior, such as that she does not communicate is no longer kind towards him or the children, then it is time to follow the commands in 4:34.

Qutb concludes this part of the verse by telling us that the Qur'ān urges Muslims to use this verse as intervention and prevention before *nushūz* comes to the surface. The methods used in the revelation may appear to be severe; however, it is far better to enforce these measures than to divorce. The revelation is there to prevent marital problems. Qutb also pointed out that when this revelation was revealed precautions were attached to it. He explains that this verse is restricted by the Prophet's *Sunnah*, especially how the Prophet conducted his familial affairs. According to him, the Prophet's family life and other aspects of his *Sunnah* give clarity (*bayyinah*) to this verse. It restricts or limits the verse so that Muslim men and women, husbands and wives will not abuse each other. The Prophet always stated that he is the best example on how to treat women.[74] I also found that historically there is no evidence that the Prophet ever resorted to drastic measures such as beating his wives in order to correct any severe marital discord. The aforementioned verses, 33:28-29 and 66:5, give evidence that even during times of crisis and disturbance in the Prophet's household, he was

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commanded by God to separate from them for a month. His traditions also substantiate what God says in the Qur'ān and the fact that he never hit or abused women. The following traditions verify these points.

> Anas narrated, "God's Prophet took an oath that he would not visit his wives for a month, and he sat in an upper room belonging to him."[75]

> Ibn 'Abbās reports in a tradition that the separation without any beating was enough to influence his wives to reconcile their marital disagreement or conflict with him. He reported that, "One morning, we saw the Prophet's wives weeping and each wife was accompanied by her family. I went to the mosque and found that it was crowded with people. Then Umar bin Al-Khattib came and went up to the upper room. He greeted him but nobody answered. He greeted the Prophet again, but nobody answered. Then the gatekeeper called him and he entered upon the room and asked, "Have you divorced your wives?" The Prophet said "No, but I have taken an oath not to go to them for one month." So the Prophet stayed away (from his wives) for twenty-nine days.[76]

There are many other *aḥādīth*, which enjoin kind treatment toward women in general. For example, in a ḥasan *ḥādīth* in Abū'Dāwūd it says,

> Ma'āwiyah ibn Ḥaydah al-Qushayrī asked the Prophet, "What do you say about our women?" and the Prophet said, "Give them to eat of what you eat and give them clothing from [the quality of] what you wear, and do not beat them, and do not use foul and hurtful speech to them. [77]

This *ḥādīth* is extremely important because it contains a plain command not to beat wives or other females.

In the Prophet's last sermon, delivered on the ninth day of Dhū al-Hijjah 10 A.H. in the Uranah Valley by Mount Arafat he said regarding women:

> "O people it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have certain rights over you. If they abide by your right, then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends

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> with anyone of whom you do not approve, as well as never commit adultery."[78]
>
> Abu Hurayrah narrated that, God's Messenger said, "The believers who show the most perfect faith are those who have the best behavior, and the best of you are best to their wives." [79]

In a *ḥadīth* found in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim it states that the Prophet said in his farewell address that hitting as a deterrent should only be resorted to if the wife has become guilty in an obvious manner of immoral conduct. It should be done in such a way as not to cause pain.[80]

Based on the evidence presented in this study, Muslims should not transgress the limits set by the *Sunnah* regarding this verse. To continue with Qutb's exegesis, he also agrees that this verse, supported with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, is not intended to force women into submission to men, nor should it be used to try to force one to love the other. He recommended, if marriage does not work, and if there is no reconciliation, then couples should separate or divorce. However, if the commands in this verse bring about harmony, and women return to the behavior, which pleases God, then the men should not oppress them or attempt to overstep the bounds set by God.

Subsequently, by consensus all the *mufassirūn* in this study, including Sayyid Qutb, if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). For God is Most High, Great (above you all). (*Fa'in aṭa'nakum fa-lā tabghū 'alayhinna sabīlan. Inn-llāha kāna 'Aliyyan Kabīrā*). They also agree that when things smooth out and there are no signs of *nushūz*, there is no need to apply these steps. To continue to use the steps when domestic relations are smooth would result in oppression of the wife. In addition, Sayyid Qutb says, if men oppress women then they are not mindful of the

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hereafter or of judgment day. These ayahs were not revealed or designed to keep couples at odds or to oppress each other.[81]

Much has been said about the aforementioned scholars and their exegesis of Qur'ān 4:34. By this, I have demonstrated that *tafsīr* brings appropriate explanation and clarity to the English translations read by African American Muslim women. To that end, I trust that this investigation has proven this point. However, the work of Ibn 'Abbās, Qurtubī, and Sayyid Qutb may be distinguished for imparting the most clarity to the English translations of Qur'ān 4:34. In addition, I consider their explanations of what God is really saying in His original text to be the most appropriate for the following reasons.

Ibn 'Abbās, does not associate the status of *qawwāmūna* with superiority over women as stated in many of the English translations. Rather he stresses men's responsibility for women as a primary factor in their designated status as *qawwām* – not that women have an inferior status, but that women have a different status than men. What God has made incumbent on men is not incumbent on women. Women are not responsible for men. His explanation about love and emotion is useful in helping one to understand the woman's responsibility to her husband. Husbands cannot control their wives' emotions. Men cannot force women to love them. Nevertheless, if their wives treat them with kindness, and guard the legitimate exclusive sexual access, to themselves, then husbands cannot expect more than that – this is the husband's right.

Al-Qurtubī's work clarifies how the reprimands were to be enforced. He is the only exegete who discusses limits and time periods on each step as outlined in the verse.

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Al-Qurtubī infers that weak aḥādīth should be qualified and not used to encourage abuse towards women. Further, his commentary clarifies that no wife should be deliberately hurt, emotionally, neither psychologically nor physically by her husband. To support his work, al-Qurtubī reported that a *Qadi* stated that a God-fearing man, especially a scholar, would not interpret the *ḥadīth* discussed in al-Tabarī *tafsīr*, "Trust in God and tie your camel," to mean, "tie your wife up and beat her".

In reference to Qur'ān 4:34, Qutb gives more of a universal and thematic explanation. He gives a sociological overview of this verse as it relates to the institution of family. He deals with the whole text using verses to give comprehensive explanations of what God is saying as it relates to the division of labor, which is the main emphasis of 4:34. Sayyid Qutb also clarifies that, although the early exegetes had both the men and women in mind, to him the primary focus of Qur'ān 4:34 deals with keeping the proper behavior (*adab*) for the family structure. The verse is not speaking about individuals per se, but is looking at structures, the social functions of family structures in Islam. Neither the concept of gendered man, nor gendered woman was the primary focus. The differentiation of duties for both of them was mentioned only in connection to the proper function of the family structure. God did not leave it up to the consciousness of man or woman to define how families should function He defined it Himself in order that the Muslim family would not be dysfunctional.

Qutb observes that *nushūz* is an emotional act; it is not a physical act such as cooking, cleaning, and working. He also argues that this verse focuses on the signs of *nushūz*, not *nushūz* itself. He further asserts that if *nushūz* really does take place,

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precautions and admonishments in this verse will be of no consequence. For him it is far better to enforce these measures than for the husband and wife to divorce.

Comments on Exegetical Translations

Out of all the English translations read by African American Muslim women investigated in this study, five are considered exegetical translations or translations with commentary. They are the translations of Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Asad, S. Abdul Maududi, Muhammad Ali and Shabbir Ahmad Usmani. In reference to the verse in question, these translators' commentaries are consistent with the *tafsīrs* of the scholars analyzed in my work.

First, the translators have similar comments on the status of *qawwāmūna.* For them, the *qawwāmūna* are the ones who shall take full care of women. The *qawwāmūna* must stand firm with the steady purpose of ensuring the right conduct (*adab*) and order in their families. They are totally responsible for safeguarding and maintaining the affairs of those who are entrusted to him by God.[82] Usmani includes in his exegesis that the rights of men and women are established with justice.[83]

In regard to the "degree above", neither Yusuf Ali nor Asad states that men are superior to women.[84] In contrast to this, Maududi states that in order for men to carry out their duties, God has given them a degree more or less above women. He states:

> Men are superior to women in the sense that they have been endowed with certain natural qualities that have not been given to women (yet) this is not in the sense that they (men) are above them (women) in honor and excellence.[85]

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Usmani believes, however, that men do have excellence over women. Men are the lords and masters of women because they are superior to them for the following reasons:

1. Men have inherent qualities such as knowledge and power of action.
2. Men spend of their wealth to take care of women.[86]

All the translators agree that a righteous woman must obey Allah first, and then her husband. Maududi adds in his work that obedience to God is of far greater importance than obedience to the husband. This point is also generally agreed on in Islamic law (*fiqh*). Maududi was the first translator to say that it is the wife's duty to refuse to obey her husband if he orders her to do things that are against God's commandment. In this sense, Maududi gives a clearer explanation than some of the early scholars on the "limits" that are placed on a woman regarding her obedience to her husband in everything he orders her to do.

Maududi's commentary is also supported by the principle in *ḥadīth*, which says, "there is no obedience owed to any creature in ordering disobedience to the Creator." [87] Regarding *nushūz*, one of the translators explains:

> It is comprised of every kind of deliberate bad behavior of a wife towards her husband, or a husband towards his wife, including mental cruelty. With reference to the husband, nushūz denotes ill treatment in physical sense of his wife (cf. 4:128). In this context (4:34), a wife's ill treatment implies a deliberate persistent breach of her marital obligation.[88]

Yet another translator has a different translation of *nushūz*. He translates it to mean desertion. In his commentary, he renders the following:

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> ...desertion primarily means a woman rising against her husband. It means her leaving the husband's place and taking an abode, which he does not like.[89]

In regard to the last two translators, one of them views *nushūz* as "family discord" while the other describes it as defiance, when a wife does not obey her husband nor does she guard his rights.[90]

In reference to the corrective measures for *nushūz*, all the translators agree that if the first two steps prove effective, there is no need to resort to the last or most severe step. Muhammad Asad and Maududi both mitigate the "beating" step with an authentic *ḥadīth*, which tells the husband to "hit" with a *miswāk*. For these translators, "hitting" is barely permissible and should preferably be avoided. They based their opinions on Imam al-Shāfi'i's *fiqh*, which stresses that the Prophet disapproved of beating.[91]

Finally, the translators' agree that no harm should come to the wife after the marital discord is resolved. The husband should now treat his wife with kindness.[92]

Comments on Modern Exegesis

There are several modern explanations of this verse, but as it relates to this study, the following are the most appropriate ones.

Barbara Stowasser in her work on the *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān compares and contrasts classical and modern exegesis of the verse in question. In her discussion on Qur'ān 4:34 and the new epistemology, she comments on the new and different approaches to explain and to amplify this verse. To illustrate, the following are her comments on the work of Amina Wadud-Muhsin, author of The Qur'ān and Woman.

> While Wadud-Muhsin follows Sayyid Qutb and others in understanding this verse as legislative of the *functional* relationship between man and

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> husband (protector and provider) and woman and wife (mother of his children), she then extends those other interpreters' principle of "gender equality *qua* mutual dependency in the family" to society at large. Here, in the societies of the modern world, the verse's meaning is revealed as the expression of an ideal (neither biological nor inherent, but valuable) obligation for men to create a better society by bettering their relationships with women, indeed as a part of fulfilling their God-given *khilafa* (trusteeship) on earth. [93]

Jamil al-Amin, author of Revolution by the Book, agrees with the commentary on Qur'ān 4:34 by both Ibn 'Abbās and Sayyid Qutb. Like Ibn 'Abbās and Qutb, al-Amin holds that there is an order (*adab*), for everything. Therefore, there is one for the functioning of the family. He states that verse 4:34,

> establishes an order, a process, a relationship based on the broader system of natural harmony created by God Himself. God encompasses all of creation, therefore, all of creation interacts and cooperates in submission to the laws of the Creator.[94]

Another contemporary commentator, Dr. 'Abd al-Āṭī, author of The Family Structure in Islam re-interprets Qur'ān 4:34:

> Men are guardians, etc. of women because men and women are not completely alike; they are differentiated and differentiable in various respects. Some of them, men and women, are endowed with what others, men and women, lack. In matters of guardianship and exercise of authority, men are generally more qualified than women are and can better deal with the external problems of the family social system. Hence, they are entrusted with the *instrumental* authority of the household. But this does not exhaust the quality of excellence, nor does it exclude the capacity or eligibility of women to excel in some other areas, e.g., *expressive* authority. If the two types of authority are "differentiated" but held to be equally essential to the family operation, then the question of the superiority of one sex to the other is actually irrelevant and hardly arises. The idea that men are superior to women, and have power over them, apparently comes from sources alien to the spirit as well as the essence of this verse.[95]

Another modern commentator, Maysam J. al-Faruqi, author of "Women's Self-

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Identity in the Qur'ān and Islamic Law," views this verse as having two different subject matters. She says, "whereas the first half of the verse has to do with legal responsibility of men towards all women, the second half discusses matters restricted to husbands and wives – that is, a breach of marital relations," [which is caused by the act of *nushūz*]

This commentator states that the word *nushūz*, literally means to stand up and fight or to rebel. It refers specifically to the sentence that immediately precedes it: "the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard the intimacy which God has ordained." As to those who do not do so, they become guilty of *nushūz* and should be reprimanded. To al-Faruqi, it is obvious that *nushūz* is used explicitly in reference to the previous sentence.

> There is a clear command that the intimacy of marriage be guarded exclusively. *Al ghayb*, the secrecy or privacy in question, means the intimate relations that must remain exclusive to the married couple. However, there is only one form of sexual misconduct that would warrant discipline and that is sexual misconduct outside of marriage. The actual act of adultery, *zina*, is addressed elsewhere in the Qur'ān and is not called *nushūz*. *Zina* calls for more stringent punishment for both parties and four witnesses to attest to the crime. Therefore, one can safely assume that *nushūz* is a stage before adultery and refers to unwarranted behavior in which a wife or a husband is making some sexual advances to another party but without carrying out an illegal act. *Nushūz*, then, would be reprehensible enough to justify action, but not the punishment of adultery.[96]

Finally, I will comment on one more exegesis of this verse by Abdul Hamid A. Abu Sulayman, Director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought in Herndon, Virginia, in his unpublished work entitled "Chastising Women: A Means to Resolve Marital Problems." In this work, he gives a comprehensive discussion on the Arabic

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term *daraba*. He found from his investigation that the compilation of the various connotations of the term *daraba* in the Qur'ān speak of approximately seventeen distinct nuances. Some of the verses read in part and the italicized translated words represent *daraba* and its derivatives.

> [A]nd God set forth another parable... 16:76, 112; 66:11.
>
> When (Jesus) the son of Mary is *held up as an example*, behold your people raise a clamor thereat (in ridicule)! 43:57.
>
> See what similes they strike for thee: but they have gone astray; and never can they find a way. 17:48.
>
> O you who believe! When you go abroad in the cause of God verify (the truth) ... 4:94.
>
> ... So a wall *shall be erected* between them, with a gate therein. Within it will be mercy throughout, and without it, all alongside, will be (wrath and punishment! 57:13.
>
> Then he turned upon them, (idols) *striking* them with the right hand. 37:93.
>
> Then how (will it be) when the angels will take their souls at death, smiting their faces and their backs? 47:27.
>
> ... I will instill terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved, Smite strike them over the necks, and smite over all their fingers and toes. 8:12.
>
> And take in your hand a bundle of thin grass and strike therewith, and break not your oath. 38:44.
>
> So, when you meet, those who disbelieve smite at their necks till when you have subdued them, bind a bond firmly on them... 47:4.
>
> When ye travel through the earth... 4:101.
>
> Therefore We draw (a veil) over their ears, for a number of years in the Cave, (So that they hear not... 18:11.

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> Shall We take away the revelation from you, and repel (you), for that ye are a people transgressing beyond bounds? 43:5.
>
> [T]hey should draw their veils all over their bosoms... And they should not strike their feet so as to draw attention to their hidden adornment... 24:31.
>
> And indeed We inspired Mûsa (Moses) (saying): Travel by night with *Ibâdi* (My slaves) and strike a dry path for them in the sea... 20:77.
>
> Verily, Allâh is not ashamed to set forth a parable... 2:26.
>
> And (remember) when Mûsa (Moses) asked for water for his people, We said: "Strike the stone with your stick." Then gushed forth there from twelve springs... 2:60.
>
> Disgrace is *pitched over them* (like a tent) ... 3:112.

Based on his examination of the above citations he noted that the root verb *daraba* (transitive and intransitive) sometimes bears several figurative or allegorical connotations which signify to isolate, to separate, to depart, to distance, to exclude, to move away, etc. Therefore, he concluded that the appropriate interpretation of the term "*daraba*" is "to chastise". To Abu Sulayman, to chastise a wife in her home in order to mend the martial difficulties and to bring the spouse back to harmony and responsibility should be constructed as "to leave the nuptial nest to move away or to separate." According to him, this perception is consistent with the Prophetic tradition that relates to the time the Prophet moved away from his wives. The verse, which describes this incident, can be found in Qur'ān 33:28-29 and 66:5.

Abu Sulayman states in his work that if neither chastising the wife (separating from her) nor seeking mediation of arbiters (as mentioned in Qur'ān 4:35) restores peace, both parties should either hold together on equitable terms or separate with grace

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(as mentioned in Qur'ān 2:229.)[97]

Similar to other modern commentators, Abu Sulayman considers the whole of the sacred text, its thematic unity and its universal worldview. Therefore, he stresses in his work that in order to correctly comprehend this verse it is necessary to place it in the general framework of the family structure and relations in Islam, so that one may understand its true implications within the objectives and purposes of the revelation. Subsequently, Qur'ān 4:34 must be interpreted, translated, read and understood in light of the following related texts:

> O mankind! fear Your Guardian Lord, Who created you From a single Person, Created out of it, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- fear Allah, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights) And be heedful of the wombs (that bore you): for Allah Ever watches over you. 4:1
>
> And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): Verily in that are signs for those who reflect 30:21
>
> A divorce is only permissible twice; after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness. It is not lawful for you, (men), to take back any of your gifts (from your wives), except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah if ye (judges) do indeed and knoweth all things 2:229
>
> O you who believe! When you marry believing women, and then divorce them before you have sexual intercourse with them, no *'iddah* [divorce prescribed period, see (V.65: 4)] have you to count in respect of them. So give them a present, and set them free i.e. divorce, in a handsome manner. (33:49)
>
> When ye divorce women, and they (are about to) fulfill the term of their (*iddat*), either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms: but do not take them back to injure them, (or) try to take undue advantage; if any one does that, he wrongs his own soul.
> Do not treat Allah's signs as a jest, but solemnly rehearse Allah's favours on you, and the fact that He sent down to you the book and wisdom, for

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> your instruction. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is well acquainted with all things. 2:231.

He concludes when you consider the content and the context of 4:34 along with the aforementioned verses and the purpose of reconciliation, the Islamic doctrine of human sanctity and dignity, the right to self determination in Islam, the consensual nature of nuptial association and the ability of nuptial partners to gracefully dissolve such associations without coercion or intimidation, the denotation of *daraba* in this verse cannot imply the infliction of pain or disgrace.[98]

With this understanding in mind, I will conclude this chapter by combining Abu Sulayman's and Maysam al-Faruqi's reinterpretation of Qur'ān 4:34, so that I may present what I consider as one of the most appropriate translation of the meaning of what God is really saying in His original text. It reads as follows:

> Men shall be responsible for the full care of women, using that which God has provided to them over what He has provided to women and that which they spend from their own means. And the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard the intimacy [al ghayb, secrecy, privacy] which God has [ordained to be] guarded. And as for those women whose *nushūz* (martial discord) you have reason to fear, [first:] admonish them, [next:] refuse to share their beds [last:] (chastise) hit them (lightly); and if there upon they pay you heed, do not seek to harm them. Behold God is most High, Great [above you all].

In the preceding discussion I examined and analyzed the exegesis of Qur'ān 4:34 by both classical and modern scholars. I discussed my conclusions and identified the most appropriate exegesis and translation of the verse in question. Now I will move on to Chapter Five. In this chapter, I will use the most appropriate translation and the results of my analysis of both early and modern *tafsīrs* of verse 4:34 to measure if the

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English translations in Chapter Five render comprehensible meaning(s) of the Arabic text of 4:34.

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Endnotes - Chapter Four

[1] Asad, p.vii-viii.
[2] Von Denffer, p. 125. See also Philips, pp. 48-50.
[3] Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 5-6, 8, 53-55. Ibn Taymiyyah also states though one should refer to exegesis of the successors of companions, the *tābi'ūn* and their successors *tābi'ū al-tābi'īn*. He states that their expositions have not been influenced by foreign ideas and have not been affected by political and theological disputes that have marred the exegesis of later generations. However, their expositions carry authority only when they are all in agreement. When they differ they are not to be followed. Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 58-59. Also, see Philips pp.33-47, gives similar sources of *tafsīr*, also refer to his lecture on "The Principles of *Tafsīr*", audiocassette, 1999, also see Zarabozo, "How To Approach the Qur'ān" pp.204-244.
[4] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 744, n. 2070. Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 750, n. 2091.
[5] Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 5-6, 8, 53-55. Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 58-59. Also, see Philips pp.33-47, gives similar sources of *tafsīr*, also refer to his lecture on "The Principles of *Tafsīr*", audiocassette, 1999, also see Zarabozo, "How To Approach the Qur'ān", pp.204-244.
[6] Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 5-6, 8, 53-55. Also, see Philips pp.33-47, gives similar principles of *tafsīr*, also refer to his lecture on "The Principles of *Tafsīr*", audiocassette, 1999, also see Zarabozo, "How To Approach the Qur'ān", pp.204-244.
[7] Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 5-6, 8, 53-55. Also, see Philips pp.33-47, gives similar principles of *tafsīr*, also refer to his lecture on "The Principles of *Tafsīr*", audiocassette, 1999, also see Zarabozo, "How To Approach the Qur'ān", pp.204-244.
[8] Philips, pp.33-47, gives similar principles of *tafsīr*, also refer to his lecture on "The Principles of *Tafsīr*", audiocassette, 1999, also see Zarabozo, "How To Approach the Qur'ān", pp.204-244.
[9] Smith, pp. 37-41. Also see Von Denffer, p. 128.
[10] Smith, pp. 57-62. Also see Von Denffer, p. 137 and McAuliffe, pp. 47-54.
[11] Ayoub, pp. 4-5.
[12] Smith, pp. 120-121. Also see Blankinship, p. 27.
[13] McAuliffe, pp. 54-62. Also see Smith, pp. 128, 126, and Cragg pp.53-74
[14] Smith, pp. 203-207. Also see Cragg, pp.53-74
[15] Qur'ān 4:34, http://www.unn.ac.uk
[16] Yusuf Ali, Roman transliterated version, p. 95.
[17] Yusuf Ali, Roman transliterated version, p. 95.
[18] Abū Dāwūd, a short version, no. 1834, a *ḥadīth ḥasan*, similarly, Ibn Mājah no. 1975.
[19] Qurtubī, Vol. 5, pp. 168-174.
[20] Qutb, Vol. 5, pp. 648-656.
[21] al-Tabari, Vol. 8, pp. 290-317.
[22] Taha, pp. 66-72.
[23] Maududi, The Meaning of Qur'an, Vol. 11, p. 127, n. 56. Also see Muhammad Shāfi'i, p. 417.
[24] Ibn 'Abbās, Vol.1, p. 69.
[25] Baydawi, Vol. 1, pp. 207-208.
[26] Qurtubi, Vol. 5, pp. 168-174.
[27] Baydawi, Vol. 1, pp.207-208.
[28] Ibn 'Abbās, Vol.1, p. 69. Also see al-Amin, p. 102-106.
[29] Siddiqi, Muhammad Z., p.79. Also see Maghniyyah, p. 310.
[30] Maghniyyah, p. 364.
[31] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 1767, n. 5516.
[32] Ibn 'Abbās, Vol.1, p. 69.
[33] Qutb, Vol. 5, pp. 648-656.
[34] Ibn Kathīr, Vol. 2, pp. 275-278. Also see Baydawi, Vol. 1, pp. 207-208.

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[35] Ibn Kathīr, Vol. 2, pp. 275-278.

[36] Al-Nawawī, Riyāḍ bin Razduq ed., Vol. 1, p. 277, *ḥadīth* 285, originally taken from al-Tirmidhi. Note that while al-Nawawī claims that al-Tirmidhī calls it *ḥasan ṣaḥīh*, the actual al-Tirmidhī calls it ḥasan gharīb, a lower grade. Ibn Mājah gives two versions of it, one weak, the other *ḥasan* in *K. al-nikāh*. Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal also gives this *ḥadīth* a ḥasan version once. Thus, it is not very widely reported, which explains why al-Tirmidhī called it gharīb where it is *ḥadīth* no. 1079, by the numbering of the Ḥarf/Sakhr CD Rom. "*Mawsū'at al ḥadīth al-sharīf*." It is in *Kitāb al-ridā'ah, bāb ḥaqq al-zawj 'alā al-mar'ah*.

[37] Salahuddin, p. 278. Also see Sheikh Abdullah Adhami, 2001. Ihya Production. Lecture on audiocassette entitled *Gender Relations: Issues Facing Men and Women*. Sheikh Adhami is a contemporary translator and interpreter of classical Islamic texts. Regarding this *ḥadīth*, Adhami explains that this injunction is for men to understand the nature of women. Women are naturally inclined to be submissive because they surrender their heart and soul (they invest all and make sacrifices) so that their marriage will work. He states that Arabic term *sujud* in the context of this *ḥadīth* means obedience and it also means lenient. Consequently if a husband misunderstands the Islamic ideals of the words in this *ḥadīth* and applies them in an abusive manner and transgresses the true meaning of the *ḥadīth*, then these words take on the opposite meaning. He concludes his explanation by stating, why would the Prophet in his farewell address say, "Fear Allah regarding your women." Adhami states, because Allah made them (women) surrender to men.

[38] Ibn Kathīr , Vol. 2, pp. 275-278.

[39] Shoomaan, Muhammad, p. 9. Also see Ibn Kathīr, Vol. 2, pp. 275-278.

[40] al-Tabarī, Vol. 8, pp. 290-317.

[41] Leila Ahmed, p. 41-47.

[42] Blankinship, Lecture, Peaceful Family Project Conference, March 2002.

[43] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., 2:233, p. 103.

[44] Hamza Yusuf, Video Tape, 1999.

[45] al-Faruqi, pp.83-88.

[46] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., 4:32, p. 218.

[47] Ibn 'Abbās, Vol.1, p. 69.

[48] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Ḥadīth 3370, p. 732.

[49] Ibn 'Abbās, Vol. 1, p. 69.

[50] Ibn 'Abbās, Vol.1, p. 69.

[51] Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhari, Vol. 7, Ḥadīth, 127, p. 98.

[52] al-Sadlaan, p. 17.

[53] Maghniyyah, pp. 357-363.

[54] Maghniyyah, pp. 357-363.

[55] Maghniyyah, pp. 357-363.

[56] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 256-257.

[57] Maghniyyah, pp. 357-363. Also see al-Sadlaan, p. 50.

[58] Ibn 'Abbās, p. 69.

[59] al-Tabarī, Vol. 8, pp. 290-331.

[60] Ibn 'Abbās, Vol. 1, p. 69.

[61] Ibn 'Abbās, Vol., 1, p. 69.

[62] Ibn 'Abbās, Vol. 1, p. 69.

[63] Nasseef, pp. 66-167;171-173. Also see Stowasser, pp. 105-106; 124-125.

[64] al-Tabarī, Vol. 8, pp. 290-331.

[65] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 97.

[66] Qurtubī, Vol. 5, pp. 168-174.

[67] Qurtubī, Vol. 5, pp. 168-174.

[68] Qurtubī, Vol. 5, pp. 168-174

[69] Zarabozo, "How To Approach the Qur'ān", p. 3. Also see al-Albani, Vol. 7, p. 78. This *ḥadīth* is also in 'Abū Dāwūd and also al-Nawawī's *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn* and is indeed weak.

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[70] Qurtubī, Vol. 5, p. 1687.
[71] Qurtubī, Vol. 5, p. 1687.
[72] Qurtubī, Vol. 5, p. 1687.
[73] Qutb, Vol. 5, pp. 648-656. Also see Noah Ha Min Keller, pp. 540-541. Keller's work also emphasizes the "signs" of *nushūz*. It states in this work that when a husband notices the signs of nushūz in his wife whether in words, as when she answers coldly when she used to answer politely; or when she refuses intimacy contrary to her usual acceptance, he should apply the corrective measures. If her behavior does not change with the application of the first two steps, then he may resort to the final step. However, the husband may hit her lightly and not to injure her break her bones, or cause blood to flow. Based on this work it is unlawful to hit anyone in the face. But what is most important, once the signs cease the husband and wife are obliged to treat each other with kindness.
[74] Qutb, Vol. 5, pp. 648-656.
[75] Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhari, Vol.7, ḥadīth 129, p. 98.
[76] Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhari, Vol.7, ḥadīth 131, p. 98.
[77] Abū Dāwūd Sunan, K. al-ni-kāḥ, b. fī ḥaqq al-mar'ah 'alā zawjihā, ḥadīth 1832.
[78] Sakr, p. 9.
[79] Al-Nawawī, Riyād bin Razduq ed., Vol. 1, p.273, ḥadīth 278.
[80] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Eng. tr. by Siddiqi., Vol. 2, p. 615. part of ḥadīth no., 2803.
[81] Qutb, Vol. 5, pp. 648-65.
[82] Asad, pp.110-111, n 45. See also Y. Ali, pp. 219-229, n 544.
[83] Usmani, pp.540-541, n 51.
[84] Asad, pp. 110-111, n 51. See also Y. Ali, pp. 219-220, n 545.
[85] Maududi, pp.121-124, n 56-57.
[86] Usmani, pp.334-335, n 51.
[87] Maududi, pp.121-124, n 58, M. Ali, pp.199, n 569.
[88] Asad, pp.110-111, n 44.
[89] Muhammad Ali, p.200, n 572.
[90] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 219-220, n 547.
[91] Asad, pp. 110-111, n 45. See also Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp.219-220, n 547. Muhammad Ali, pp.200, n 572, Maududi, pp. 121-124, n 59.
[92] Asad, pp. 110-111, n 45. See also Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp.219-220, n 547. Muhammad Ali, pp.200, n 572, Maududi, pp. 121-124, n 59.
[93] Stowasser, p. 59. See also Wadud-Muhsin, pp. 1-4.
[94] al-Amin, pp. 102-103.
[95] Abd al-At, pp. 180-181.
[96] al-Faruqi, pp. 72-101.
[97] Abu Sulayman, pp. 1-19.
[98] Abu Sulayman, pp. 1-19.

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CHAPTER FIVE
ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE MEANING OF QUR'ĀN 4:34: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

In the preceding chapters, I examined and analyzed the exegesis of Qur'ān 4:34 by both classical and modern scholars. I discussed my conclusions and identified the most appropriate exegesis and translation of the verse in question. Based on the examination of the *tafsīr* of Qur'ān 4:34 which gives the most appropriate explanation of 4:34 and the most appropriate translation, one will see that some of the existing English translations in the following analysis do not render a appropriate meaning of the Arabic text of 4:34.

Along with using my analysis of *tafsīr* as the criterion to determine if English translations render accurate meaning for the Arabic text of 4:34, I will also use El Tayeb's hermeneutical analysis of the Qur'ān, and the concept of the significant introduction, (discussed in Chapter One) as the additional paradigm in conducting this examination.

However, unlike El Tayeb's work which deals with analyzing problems with translations as they relate to the overall meaning of the Qur'ān, this study is limited to analyzing English translations of only one verse, Qur'ān 4:34, in order to determine if they render comprehensive meaning for the target reader, the African American Muslim woman. I expect that this examination will show that some of the English translations in this study do not have significant introductions to guide readers through the reading process, nor do they inform them to turn to *tafsīr* for additional commentary and explanation of the meaning of the Qur'ān.

Before I begin my examination, the following comments are warranted regarding some advantages of English translations. From this investigation, I have found that

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generally speaking, English translations are beneficial to the targeted readers. Many African American Muslim women, who do not read Arabic, depend on English translation for guidance, enlightenment, and inspiration. In fact, after some African American women read the English translation, they even convert to Islam. According to Dr. Blankinship in his work, "*Murshid Al-Qari*", "translations by Muslims in English are beneficial because a translation is a kind of explanation, so that a translation may help to throw light on the original through offering possible interpretations. What is obscure in one language may be clarified by what is written in another."[1] Thus, on the whole translations are beneficial, including existing English translations of the Qur'ān.

It is not our purpose to deny the benefits of translations, not is it intended to disparage the work of Muslim translators who labored untiringly and sincerely to translate the intended meaning of the text. Rather, our purpose is to give evidence that many of the available English translations need the support of exegesis to help English readers acquire the best explanation and understanding of the text's intended meaning, especially as it relates to Qur'ān 4:34. In addition, English translations should have good introductions that guide the reader through the reading process by informing them of those essential elements that are associated with the meaning of the Qur'ān as a whole and are essential to the reader's understanding of the text.

Examination of the English Translations of Qur'ān 4:34

I have analyzed a range of English translations of the verse in question. I found that there are 114 existing complete English translations, and approximately 41 English

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selections.[2] I have read approximately 45 different translations of this verse, but I examine only 15 translations here. The translations examined are divided into three categories. The first category consists of translations by Orientalists. The second category consists of Ahmadi translations. The third category consists of translations by Muslims whose work is accepted by the 'ulamā or the orthodox Muslim community. The following methods were employed in this analysis of English translations:

1. I have included brief biographical information on each translator.
2. I have quoted their translations of verse 4:34 completely, including some of the translator's commentary if added in the translated text.
3. I have given some of my own analysis of each of the translations following the translator's comments.

I will now begin my analysis of translations by early Orientalists, and conclude by analyzing the translations that are frequently read by African American Muslim women.

Orientalist Translations

In this category, I have the very first English translation, which dates back to the year 1649, as well as other later ones by English non-Muslim translators. Most of the earliest translations were inspired more of less by hostile intentions, and reflect the translators' misunderstandings about the purpose and meaning of the Qur'ān. These translations also do not avoid the pitfalls of literalism as discussed in the preceding chapters. They reflect strong doubt that the Qur'ān is God's word verbatim, rather assuming that Muhammad is the author of the sacred text. Consequently, these biased attitudes and perceptions dictate how the translator approaches the text, and strongly influence how the Qur'ān is translated, interpreted, and understood.

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As a result, the following translators have produced distorted translations with introductions that reflect biases and hostility towards Islam. Moreover, none of their translations contains a significant introduction; therefore, one is not guided through the reading process so that they may gain an understanding of the universal concepts or ideals of the sacred text. Although none of the translations below is popular in the African American Muslim community, they have had a significant influence on translations read by the target readers.

Ross Alexander: (999-1064/1591-1654). The Alcoran of Mahomet Translated Out of Arabique into French, by the Sieur Du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, and Resident for the King of France at Alexandria, and Newly Englished for the Satisfaction of All That Desire to Look Into Turkish Vanieites, to Which is Prefixed the Life of Mahomet...with a Needful Caveat, or Admonition, for Those Who Desire to Know What Use May Be Made of, or If There Be Danger in Reading the Alcoran. London, no publisher, 1649. 511 pp. Reprint, London: Randal Taylor, 1688. Also Reprinted, 1933 and as part of Ross's works in 1719. Ross' latest edition was published in 1856

This is the very first and oldest English-language translation of the meaning of the Qur'ān. The translator, Ross, an Anglican clergyman, expressed extremely strong anti-Islamic sentiment in his translations.[3] Ross was unacquainted with Arabic. He did not base his work on the Qur'ān's Arabic text but rather on a French translation, The Alcoran of Mahomet, by the Sieur Du Ryer. However, Ross was not a French scholar; therefore, his work is considered to be faulty and of little use.[4] Another commentary states that Du Ryer's: "despicable French version of 1647 was rendered into poor English by Ross".[5] I was able to locate the original edition at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, PA. After reading this text, I concluded that the work was very difficult and awkward to read. It was hard to determine where the verses began and ended because within the text there was no numbering of the verses. Although the

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translation of the meaning of God's word was quite ambiguous, Ross' comments in his introduction and appendices are very clear, so that there are strong indications that he was very hostile toward Islam. To illustrate this point Ross writes in his introduction,

> "This translation is for Christians, and I thought good to bring it to their colors, that so viewing thine enemies in their full body, thou must the better prepare to encounter."[6]

Yet this work is the foundation for all subsequent existing English translations. With these findings in mind, Ross's translation of Qur'ān 4:34 reads as follows:

> The men shall have authority over the women; they shall have them in their keeping; they shall have in their power the wealth that God shall give them; and shall have care of what shall be convenient to be expended for them. Discreet and obedient wives observe in the absence of their husbands, the commandment of God, make remonstrance to them that shall be disobedient, and remove them from your bed, chastise them. If they obey you seek not occasion to abuse them unjustly. God is most high and most mighty.

As mentioned above I found that this is not an accurate translation of the meaning of the Qur'ān 4:34. The first concern is with Ross' translation of the Arabic term *qawwāmūn.* He translated this term to mean authority (men have authority over women; they shall have them in their keeping). Yet the literal definition of *qawwām* found in Hans Wehr is Arabic dictionary is "caretaker, custodian, guardian, and supporter." [7] According to Ibn 'Abbās' *tafsīr* of this term, it means those who take care of women.[8] Qurtubī reports that the term *qawwāmūn* means: men are responsible for maintaining women.[9] Further, in Muhammad Asad's exegetical translations it states that the expression *qawwām* is also extensive form of *qa'im* (one who is responsible for to take care of a person or thing). Thus, *qāma 'alā 'mar'ah* signifies: he undertook the

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maintenance of a woman or he maintained her. He explains that the grammatical form *qawwām* is more comprehensive than *qā'im*, and combines the concepts of physical maintenance and protection as well as moral responsibility. Thus, the term *qawwāmūn* is rendered as: men shall take full care of women.[10] God has entrusted women to the protection and care of men and in this sense, He has given men the authority to carry out these duties. Further, men will be accountable to God as to how they implemented these functions.

Therefore, as seen in my exegetical analysis of this verse found in Chapter Four, authority should not be equated with superiority, control, power, or excellence over women; it is merely associated with responsibility and accountability. For example, in that analysis I reported that Ibn 'Abbās explains, that responsibility is the primary factor in the man's designated status as *qawwām*. Hence, it should not be a prerequisite for a man to reduce the woman's status to an inferior one and raise his own status to a superior one in order for him to carry out his God-given duties.

Based on the division of labor in this verse, the man and woman have different statuses but are of equal value in the sight of God. The primary distinction is that what God had made incumbent on men is not incumbent on women. Women are not responsible for men. Moreover, as this study pointed out, Muslim men are to follow the example of the Prophet as *qawwām*. In this status, the Prophet was responsible for the full welfare of all women. The Prophet did not abuse his authority in his treatment of women as mentioned in the previous chapters.

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It is obvious that the translator Ross did not include a significant introduction in his translation that would guide the reader through the reading process and to inform them of those elements associated with the intended meaning of the Qur'ān as a whole. In regard to the verse in question, the translator did not considered the whole of the sacred text, its thematic unity, and its universal worldview, all of which is necessary in rendering a complete translation within the light of the Islamic family structure. A good translator should first determine the intended meaning of a passage as it relates to the above points and then render its true implication into English. This does not seem to be the case with Ross. Hence, the way he translated the very first sentence of this verse is gender-biased, because it implies that God has commanded men to have absolute authority and control over women, but, as discussed, this view is not accurate.

Another flaw is that the translator did not translate part of the text. For instance, in the second line of the verse, the translation of the words: *wallātī takhāfūna nushūzahunnu* is missing, i.e., the word *nushūz* is not translated at all. Indeed, Ross' translation implies that it is the wives who are making remonstrance and chastising their husband, which is not the intended meaning of the Arabic terms at all. Overall, this translation does not render a comprehensible interpretation of the intended meanings of the Qur'ān 4:34.

Consequently, this translation is misleading. Yet this work has been the underlying foundation for all subsequent English translations right down to the 21st century.

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Sale, George (1108-1149/1697-1734). The Koran: Translated into English from the Original Arabic. London: Frederick Warne and Co. Ltd., no date. Original edition was published in 1734.

This is the second English translation; there are at least 123 editions of this work.[11] Sale's approach was just as harsh as Ross, he too, assumed that the Qur'ān was a forgery, and that Muhammad had imposed a "false religion in human kind."[12] His translation is especially considered as the ancestor of most English Qur'ānic translations because it is more famous than Ross' work and has been reprinted many more times. Like Ross' translation, Sale's work is also makes difficult and awkward reading.

> Men shall have the pre-eminence above women, because of those advantages wherein God hath caused the one of them to excel the other, and for that which they expend of their substance in maintaining their wives. The honest women *are* the obedient, careful in the absence of their husbands, for that God preserveth them, by committing them to the care and protection of men. But those, whose perverseness ye shall be apprehensive of, rebuke; and remove them into separate apartments, and chastise them. But if they shall be obedient unto you, seek not an occasion *of* quarrel against them: for God is high and great.

Like Ross, Sale misunderstood the literal definition and explanation of the term *qawwāmūn*, translating the term as meaning, "to have pre-eminence." However, as seen in Chapter Four, most commentators explain the term to mean responsibility; men are responsible for women. Concerning the Arabic term *faḍḍala*, the literal meaning is to favor or prefer; however, Sale translated it to mean those advantages wherein God hath caused the one of them to excel the other. This seems to imply that men are superior to women more is warranted by the Arabic term. As seen in my analysis, a more appropriate definition for *faḍḍala* is "providing sustenance." Hence, a better translation

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would read, "Men have full responsibility of women by using that which God has provided to them over what he has provided to women." The extra provision is inheritance; God sanctioned that men receive more inheritance than women do. This may be seen as an advantage over women however, as men are obligated to spend their entire inheritance for the care of women while, although women receive less, they are not obligated to share their inheritance. In this context, men do not have advantage over women nor do they excel them.

In the second line of Sale's translation it appears that, he did not adequately translate phrases "*hāfiẓatun li-l-ghabibinā ḥafiẓa Allah. Wa-llātī...nushūz,*" meaning "the devout ones who guard the intimacy which God has (ordained to be) guarded. As to those who you fear marital discord..." However, Sale interpreted this junction of the verse to mean "careful in the absence of their husbands, for that God preserveth them, by committing them to the care and protection of men. This part seems especially off and contains an exegetical expansion. Further, Sale's interpretation of *nushūz,* " [b]ut those, whose perverseness ...," definitely changes the intended meaning of the text. Primarily, *nushūz* in this verse relates specifically to the term "*li-l-ghaybi*" which literally means the unseen but, in the context of this verse, means secrecy or privacy, which implies exclusive intimate relations. Lawful, exclusive sexual access is the one right that the husband has over the wife. If she refuses to grant her husband his right as discussed in Chapter Four, this is a sign of *nushūz.* Yet another concern is Sale's interpretation of the Arabic term -*'iẓūhumna.* Literally, the word is defined as "admonish." Translations for this term include "to give *nasiha* (sincere advice)," or "to

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remind of one's relationship with and duties to God." "Rebuke" is certainly a harsh word not warranted as a translation of *'iẓūhunna* at all. However, the most serious flaw in Sale's translation of the verse is his interpretation of *wa-hjurūhunna fī-l-madāji'*, which literally means "to leave them in their beds", not to move them away.

However, the exegetes differ with regard to the explanation of this term. Some render it to mean, to physically leave the bed while others explain it to mean, to remain in the bed but to ignore the wife. However, it definitely does not mean "to remove them into separate apartments." This interpretation is not consistent with Islamic family law, which mandates that even during times of *'iddah* (waiting period for women before divorce), the spouses must continue to live together. It is not permissible for the husband to remove his wife from his living quarters. In regard to the term *wā-dribhunna* ("hit them"). Sale renders it to mean, "chastise", copying Ross, who originated the word "chastise" for *wā-dribhunna.* As noted in my analysis of modern exegesis found in Chapter Four, some scholars also translated the Arabic as "chastise," so this does not appear as bad a fault. Nonetheless, because of the flaws found in this translation, Sale does not give an accurate rendering of the Arabic text of Qur'ān 4:34.

Rodwell, J.M.: The Koran (London, 1861, revised 1876) 32 editions.

Rodwell was an Anglican Christian priest and friend of the evolutionist Darwin. His introduction expresses his hostility towards Islam. His is the third translation in English and in it, he follows and revises Sale's earlier version. The quality of translation suffers from a number of mistakes of mistranslations and misinterpretations; however,

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the literary quality is better. He also changed the traditional order of the chapters of the Qur'ān.[13] His translation reads as follows:

> Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God hath gifted the one above the other, and on account of the outlay they make from their substance for them. Virtuous women are obedient, careful, during *the husband's* absence, because God hath of them been careful (n. or: *of that which God would have them care for*). But chide those for whose refractoriness ye have cause to fear; remove them into beds apart, and scourge them: but if they are obedient to you, then seek not occasion against them: verily, God is High, Great!

Both Ross' and Sale's translations influence Rodwell's work. Like their translations, this translation does not have commentary to explain why men are gifted with the "degree above" and women are not. Furthermore, there is no explanation of what constitutes refractoriness. The translator does not comment on those things that women do that may be reprehensible enough to deserve scourging. It is important to note how Rodwell originates the word "scourge" for *wa-dribhunna*, which is a much harsher translation that "chastise." The exact meaning of "scourge" has unfavorable connotations. Thus, Genghis Khan is sometimes called "The Scourge of God", a "scourge" means a "plague", and the "Scourging of Christ" was when he Romans beat him before the crucifixion. Although he does translate *'idhuuhunna* as "chide" which is milder than "rebuke", his translation on a whole is still not consistent with the Arabic meaning of Qur'ān 4:34.

Palmer, E.H.: The Koran (London 1880) 15 editions

Palmer was a 19th century Orientalist and a Cambridge scholar who had little regard for the claims of Islam. Palmer stated that "the language of the Qur'ān is noble and

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forcible, but it is not elegant in the sense of literary refinement." Although his work is accused of "ruggedness", it is in a simpler idiom than the previous three translations, and thus often became a model for later translations.

According to my research, Palmer writes in his introduction that he has translated the Qur'ān literally, yet he omits words. His work was noted as having no less than 70 instances of omissions and mistranslations.[14]

> Men stand superior to women in that God hath preferred some of them over others, and in that they expend of their wealth: and the virtuous women, devoted, careful (in their husbands') absence, as God has cared for them. But those whose perverseness ye fear, admonish them and remove them into bedchambers and beat them; but if they submit to you, then do not seek a way against them; verily, God is high and great.

Palmer's work is a revision of Sale's translation with influence from Rodwell. One of his obvious flaws is how he translated the Arabic sentence "*Fa-ṣ-ṣālihātu qānitātun ḥāfiẓātun li-ghaybi bimā ḥāfiza-llāhu.*" as, "and the virtuous women, devoted, careful (in their husband's) absence, as God has cared for them." However, most translators render it to mean, "Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard." Yet, I think the most appropriate meaning is, "And the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard their husband reputation, and the intimacy [*al ghayb*, secrecy, privacy], which God has [ordained to be] guarded. In addition, one should note that Palmer originates the word "beat" (which is bad sounding), for *wa-dribūhunna* which is the most controversial term in this verse because its literal meaning is "to hit them." Palmer's work has definitely influenced the translations of later Muslim translators because like Palmer they also translate of term *wa-dribūhunna as* "beat," which is now

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the most widespread translation of that term. As discussed and analyzed in Chapter Two, the usage and application of this Arabic term has caused controversy in Muslim families.

Dawood, N.J.: The Koran (London 1956) 11 ed. Harmondsworth Penguin Books, first published 1956.

Dawood is an Iraqi Jewish scholar who long ago migrated to the West. In the earlier editions, his introduction contains hostile remarks about the Prophet. However, later editions only speak of the influence of Jewish and Christian teachings on the Prophet's messages. However, in some of these later editions there are also some serious mistakes of translation of certain verses. Earlier editions of his work contained the revised surah (chapter) order that goes back to Nöldeke and was followed by Rodwell, although later he restored the traditional order of the surahs. Dawood's translation is thus influenced by Rodwell's work. Palmer's translation also influenced Dawood's work. Dawood's work is the most widely- used translation among non-Muslims.[15] His translation reads as follows:

> Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because God has guarded them. As for those from whom your fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them. God is high, supreme.

This translation contains similar mistakes to those found in the previous translations; thus, like the other translations; it does not render an accurate meaning of Qur'ān 4:34. Further, out of all the translations by Orientalists, this one has the greatest

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impact on the targeted readers (African American Muslim women). I found that the target readers read this translation because they think Dawood is a Muslim translator. They are unaware of the quality of his translation and the serious mistakes in his work.

In addition to the evidence and comments presented above, I found that none of the aforementioned translations measure up to the standards of a good translation, one that will lead the reader to the reading process so that they may gain the appropriate understanding of the verse. They are gender-biased and inaccurate translations with strong antipathy towards Islam. There is absolutely no commentary on the meaning of the Qur'ān to help the reader grasp the message and purpose of the text. Other concerns include grammatical and rhetorical problems as well as the style and quality of the translation.

Qadyani Ahmadi Translations

The second category is those translators who belong to the Ahmadis or Qadyanis, who acknowledged Ghulam Ahmad (c.1251-1326/c.1835-1908) as messiah and/or prophet.[16] That position has proven completely unacceptable to the Sunni community (*'ulama*). This Ahmadiyyah ideology pervades their introductions and notes. These translations do contain lengthy commentary on the meaning of the Qur'ān, and may often be considered as exegetical translations. Some of the commentary is within the translation itself, while other comments are included in the commentary notes. These notes are printed below in the text.

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The popular translations in this category that are read by the target population are Muhammad Ali and Amatul Rahman, Abdul Mannan Omar. Although they are not accepted by the Sunni *'ulama*, some African American Muslim women still read these translations. Based on my field research I found that early indigenous Muslims were first taught by Ahmadis, and given the Muhammad Ali translations. The Ahmadi missionaries immigrated to the United States between 1920 and 1930, when translations proliferated. The Muhammad Ali was the only widely available Muslim translation. Although these indigenous Muslims later left the Ahmadiyyah movement to follow Sunni tradition, they held on to this translation and still refer to it today.

The other Ahmadi translation by Amatul Rahman and Abdul Omar, was one of the first translations primarily by a woman; therefore, many African American Muslim women were eager to own this translation. However, some uninformed indigenous Muslims are unaware of the translation's makeup, or of the translators' ideological presuppositions, and their approach to the Qur'ān, because these are concealed by the translators. As a result, Muslims often forget both these translations are colored by the work of Orientalists as well as by their own Ahmadi ideology, which differs from orthodox Islam. Reviews of these translations follow.

Ali, Muhammad (1293-1371 / 1876-1951). The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary. Rev. ed. Chicago: Specialty Promotions Co., 1985, under the auspices of the Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam of Lahore, Pakistan. Lxvi + 1256 pages.

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This translation was completed in 1917 and revised several times. It has extensive explanatory notes, as well as an extensive and detailed index. However, Muhammad 'Ali was an Ahmadi, who acknowledged Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (c. 1251-1326/1835-1908) as messiah, though not as prophet.[16] He was a student of Allamah Al Ḥāfiz Al Hakim Nooruddin. Nooruddin was born in Bhera (Punjab) in 1840. Ali's explanation and interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān are based on Nooruddin's life long study of the Qur'ān. Most Ahmadi translations of the Qur'ān are influenced by the work of Nooruddin.[17] However, their Ahmadiyyah ideology and position are unacceptable to the Sunni *'ulama.* In Muhammad Ali's translation, his Ahmadiyyah ideology comes through in his introductions and notes. He tends to dismiss miracles as natural phenomena, and refers to them as allegorical. Although his ideology deviates from the mainstream Muslim norm, the translation still must be considered a learned work. Pickthall's, Yusuf 'Ali's, and Daryabadi's translations are influenced by his work.[18]

> Men are the maintainers of women, with what Allah has made some of them to excel others and with what they spend out of their wealth. So the good women are obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded. And (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the beds and chastise them. So if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Surely Allah is ever Exalted, Great.

Muhammad Ali's translation of 4:34 is a revision of Palmer's translation, and is influenced by Ross and Sale's work. Yet Ali's translation is not as harsh as those earlier translations. Unlike their work, this translation is a modern one and its simplicity and mildness of language reflects Muhammad Ali's liberalism. For instance, Ali translates

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the term *qawwāmūna* to mean "maintainers," whereas the Orientalists render it to mean "authority or superior." The target readers consider "maintainer" as an acceptable translation. African American Muslim women respect Ali's work, because it does not suggest that men excel women, but only that some individuals (unspecified gender) excel the other. Ali uses language that corresponds with the observable reality in the larger society: not all men have advantages over all women, neither do all women have advantages over all men. Hence, this is a far better translation, unlike those that explicitly specify that God has made the one superior to the other. Ali is the only translator in this study who translated *nushūz* to mean "desertion," which is not an accurate translation if it means that the wife has fled from her husband, although it could mean that the wife has deserted her husband's bed. Nonetheless, the women in this study still appreciated this rendering because Ali translates *wa-dribūhunna* as "chastise", which is mild in comparison to beat.

Nuri, Khadim Rahmai. The Running Commentary of the Holy Qur'ān. Edited by Zohurul Hoque. Shillong (East Pakistan): Sufi Hamsaya Gurudwar, 1964. xvi + 1144 pp. This translation is based on the work of Sher 'Ali. Sher 'Ali's translation appears to be the first Qadiyani Ahmadi translation. According to Kidwai, Nuri's work is also influenced by the work of Nooruddin and his students. This translation is also influenced by Sufistic idealogy.[19]

> Men are the protectors (: 135) over women, (on account of that or) by means of which Allah has made some of them eminent above the other, and on account of what they spend out of their property (for the support

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> of women); so that the good women are devout (33:31, 35, 66:5, as to their duty to Allah), guarding that (rights of husband like his reputation and property and their own chastity, even) in the absence (of their husbands), which Allah has guarded (because Allah has enjoined it to be guarded as their duty to their husbands). And (although the grey mare must not be the better horse, as to) those women (on whose part) you fear disobedience, then (whereas a stitch in time saves nine) admonish them (first), and (next, not carrying matters with high-handedness) leave them alone in the beds. (i.e., suspend conjugal relations, in case they repeat their wrong course, :15), and (lastly, seeing that even Arthur could not tame a woman's tongue, you may even strike the iron while it is hot, and so) chastise them, (but not breaking a butterfly on the wheel, it should be such that it leaves no impression on their person, Tir. 10:11 – this physical chastisement is allowed only in case they still persist in their wrong course). If they then obey you then do not seek a way (of divorce or other extreme measures) against them (rather be to their virtues very kind; be to their faults a little blind :19). Verily Allah is ever Most High, Great (so everything should be done to His will, not by taking the law in thy own hand).

This translation employs so many silly and offensive clichés that it is rendered incomprehensible. The translator compares women with animals and insects: (although the grey mare must not be the better horse)..., chastise them, (but not breaking a butterfly on the wheel, it should be such that it leaves no impression on their person. These clichés are silly, offensive, and dehumanizing and are not at all relevant to the accurate meaning of Qur'ān 4:34. Overall, the translator's commentary does not add the vital context to the translated text, but rather it causes the text to appear ridiculous. Quite candidly, this is the most absurd translation in this investigation.

Nooruddin, Al-Ḥāfiz Al-Hajj Al-Hakim Allamah (1840-1914). The Holy Qur'ān. Translated by Amatul Rahman Omar and Abdul Mannan Omar. Hayward, CA: Tehama University Press (Noor Foundation). 65-A + 833 pp.

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According to Blankinship's work, this translation is listed under the name of 13th/19th century Indian scholar Nooruddin, yet it actually is the work of the translators, the Omars. In their introduction, they say they were guided by the exegetical work of the earlier scholar in their interpretations, but the translation is theirs. This is frequently a device used by translators to attribute their own unknown work to someone more famous or authoritative. Nooruddin was the most loyal follower of Miraz Ghulam Ahmad, and even succeeded the founder for six years, 1908-1914, as the leader of the Ahmadi community with the title of Khalifat al Mansih I.[20] In this translation the Arabic text is included. There are some notes and an index.[21] Amatul is the daughter-in-law of Nooruddin, and the daughter of Sher 'Ali, another Ahmadi translator. According to my research, Amatul Rahman may be the first woman in Muslim history to attempt a translation of the Holy Qur'ān in English. She earned her Master's Degree in Arabic from the University of the Punjab in Lahore, Pakistan, in 1950. Amatul's husband assisted her with this translation. The translation was completed June 1990. Amatul Rahman died a few days after the final revision on July 15, 1990 in Rheinfelden, Germany.[22]

Amatul Rahman, and Abdul Mannan Omar, 1991, rev. 1997– eclectic, some Sher 'Ali, Muhammad'Ali.

> Men are the full maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them excel the other, and because men spend out of their wealth on them. So virtuous women are those who are obedient (to Allah) and guard (their own chastity as well as the rights and secrets of their husbands even) in (their) absence, as Allah has guarded (the women's rights). As for those women (on whose part) you apprehend disobedience and bad behavior, you may admonish them (first lovingly) and (then) refuse to share their

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beds with them and (as a last resort) punish them (mildly). If they, then, obey you, you shall seek no other way against them. Indeed, Allah alone is High, (and) Great.

This was one of the first translations based on the interpretation of a 21st Century woman. Her translation contributes a gender inclusive reading of the Qur'ān, one which validates the female voice. As one may note it is a far better exegetical translation than the translation analyzed above. In contrast, the commentary here positively expands the text, while the Nuri commentary hinders its meaning. Although this work is also influenced by the work of Orientalists, it is it is undoubtedly notable for softening the structures in its interpretations greatly.

Sunni Translations

The third category consists of *Sunni* translations read by the target readers in this research. These translations betray no perceived hostility or intentional sectarian distortion in their production as they represent more the mainstream of classical interpretation. Their introductions reflect the translators' understanding of the text and their method of translation.

Some of these translations are somewhat like *tafsīr*, because they are considered as exegetical translations. Their commentaries on Qur'ān 4:34 is discussed in Chapter Four. Below are the translators' annotated bibliographies, and their translations of the verse in question.

Ali, Abdullah Yusuf (1289-1367 / 1872-1948). The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary, 1352 / 1934. 3rd revised edition 1356/1938. Since reprinted many times in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the USA, and elsewhere. Reprints of 3rd edition include: The Glorious Qur'ān: Translation and Commentary. Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1977. lxxix + 1862 pages + 32 pages of Arabic. Same, Leicester: The

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Islamic Foundation, 1978. Also: The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary. Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1990, 1854 pages. Same, Cairo: Dar al-Manar, 1862 pages + Arabic introduction.

At least 35 editions. Among indigenous Muslims this translation is the most frequently read. The latest edition is often given as a gift to new Muslims to help in their guidance on their embracing Islam. According to A.R. Kidwai in his work English Translation of the Qur'ān: An Annotated Bibliography, Ali's translation is written in style and couched in chaste English. It stands out above all other translations as a highly readable rendering of the Qur'ān in English. This work is based on Pickthall and Muhammad 'Ali but greatly expanded beyond their phrasing. Yet, another scholar states that the translation is occasionally weak and tendentious, as well as usually florid and archaistic, and by itself is not preferable to Pickthall for most verses. However, the main contribution of Yusuf Ali consists of his 6,311 very detailed and extensive notes on the text, and his fourteen lengthy explanatory appendices. Thus, the notes virtually constitute the first extensive Sunni Muslim *tafsīr* in English, and for that reason Yusuf 'Ali, on the whole, is more valuable than Pickthall for Qur'ānic study.[23]

> Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance): for God is Most High, Great (above you all).

This interpretation from the Yusuf Ali 1938 edition, is read by most of the targeted readers. Ali's interpretation of Qur'ān 4:34 is actually an expansion of

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Muhammad Ali's translation. Therefore, both of these translations render appropriate interpretations of the Arabic meaning of this verse. However, Yusuf Ali expands his work with commentary which gives the reader a more complete understanding of the meaning of verse 4:34. Not only does this translator use commentary within the text, he also uses clear and detailed footnotes. His footnotes are based on generally accepted exegetical principles. Hence, Ali's explanations in his footnotes are dedicated to guiding English speaking readers to gain a better understanding of the verse in question. Overall, Yusuf Ali's translation is well received by African American Muslim women.

Ahmad, Mohammad Ashfaq, 1992 ed. (tr. 1980, from Usmani's *tafsīr*) – independent

Maulana Mohammad Ashfaq Ahmed translated this English translation from the Urdu translation of the Holy Qur'ān by Shaikh-ul-Hind Maulana Mahmood Hasan of Deoband. Ahmed also translated the *tafsīr* that Shaikh-ul-Islam Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Usmani added to this translation. Ahmed was born in 1931 in Saharanpur, U.P. (India). He was a grandson of the renowned Indian scholar of Arabic language and literature Maulana Faiz-al- Hasan Saharanpuri. Mohammad Ashfaq Ahmed received his degrees of M.A. (Political Science) from Aligarh Muslim University.

Maulana Matloob-ur-Rahman Usmani was the shaikh and master of Mohammad Ashfaq Ahmed. The shaikh had spiritual traning in Islamic Law (*Shari'ah)* and Islamic Spirituality (*Tasawwuf),* which he taught to Ahmed. As the Leader (*Khalifah)* of his Shaikh, Ahmed was extremely active in propagating Islam and guiding men to the goal of beneficence (*ihsan)* and nearness (*qurb)* to God. Ahmed is known for presenting

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Islamic teachings in their pristine purity and fighting against unorthodox ideas and innovations. Maulana Ashfaq Ahmed expired in July 1986 and was buried in Karachi by the side of his Shaikh whose mission he had been carrying out throughout his life.[24] Thus, Ashfaq Ahmed's translation represents to some extent the conservative Deobandi tradition of India Pakistan.

The translation is as follows:

> Men are made lords over women for that Allah gave greatness to one over the other and for that they expended of their wealth; then those women who are virtuous, they are obedient and guard at back with God's guarding. And those women you fear their misconduct admonish them and sleep away from their couches and beat them; if then they obey you, look not for any way of blame against them. Surely, God is the Highest of all, the Great.

Of all the translations examined in this research, this is by far the most offensive to Muslim women. The most crucial problem is the translation of the Arabic terms *qawwāmūna* and *faḍḍala*. Men are made lords over women for that Allah gave "greatness" to one over the other. In Usmani's *tafsīr*, he states that men are lords over women and have greatness over women due to two reasons; the one natural and the other material. The natural reason is that God has given excellence to some over the others in their inherent qualities and virtues. These qualities are knowledge and the power of action. According to Usmani in these two basic qualities, which are the source of all other qualities, virtues and perfections, men are superior to women. The material reason is that men expend of their wealth.[25] It is probable that Usmani may base his interpretation on the following tradition.

> Narrated Abu Hurayrah God's messenger said, if I were to order anyone

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> to prostrate himself before another, I would order a woman to prostrate herself before her husband.[26]

However, the commentary on this *hadīth* does not support his claim that men are lords over women. The commentary merely emphasizes that a man has certain rights over his wife, and it is important that she grant him these rights within her capacity to do so. Moreover, as I discussed throughout Chapter Four, gender does not automatically make a man superior to a woman. Biological difference does not have any negative impact on a woman's intellect. Nor should it entail any sociological consequences that justify the tendency to place restrictions on the role of Muslim women in society. Moreover, Usmani's translation is also influenced by the work of Orientalists. For example, Usmani takes the word 'beat' from Palmer's translation of *wa-dribūhunna.*

This is probably the most male-exalting of all the translations. It is a prime example of male manipulation of the meaning of Qur'ān 4: 34, which definitely perpetuates patriarchal politics. Because of inaccurate interpretations such as this, there is a high percentage of Muslim women who are still marginalized, restricted, and disempowered.

Asad, Muhammad (1318-1412 / 1900-1992). The Message of the Qur'ān. Leiden and London: E.J.Brill, 1979. Reprinted at Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980, with revised edition 1984. x + 998 pages.

The translator was an Austrian Jewish journalist (born Leopold Weiss) who embraced Islam in 1345/1926 in Arabia, was a companion to King 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, and wrote many works on Islam, of which this was the greatest and last. Asad

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has extensive notes, many of which are very long and give full explanations. In them, Asad very often cites the classical *tafsīr* literature, with full references; also, *hadīth* are occasionally cited, always with proper references. His translation is considered within the bounds of what is acceptable to Sunnis. However, his commentary does contain some modernist and allegorical interpretations.[27]

Asad, Muhammad, 1980 ed. – M. Ali base, w. Pickthall and Palmer

> Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions. And the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard the intimacy which God has (ordained to be) guarded.
> And as for those women whose ill-will you have reason to fear, admonish them (first); then leave them alone in bed; then beat them; and if thereupon they pay you heed, do not seek to harm them. Behold, God is indeed most high, great!

Asad is a liberal modernist on women's issues. Hence, his translation is popular among middle class Muslims. The African American Muslim women in this study also favor this translation. Asad's translation is also very close to the most appropriate translation cited in the end of Chapter Four. However, the primary concern with his work is that he did not use a milder translation for *wa-dribūhumna.* Actually, Asad borrowed the translation beat from Palmer's interpretation.

Bewley, Abdalhaqq and Aisha, 1999 The Noble Qur'ān A New rendering of its Meaning in English. London: Madinah Press, 1999, 651pages + Glossary.

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Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley was born in 1948 in the United States. Formerly a Christian, she converted to Islam in 1968. She has a BA in French and MA in Near Eastern Languages from the University of California at Berkeley. Ms. Bewley spent a year with a fellowship at the American University in Cairo and at the same time attended a seminar on Sufism and Islamic philosophy at Dar al-'Ulum. She studied under the tutelage of Shaykh Abdalqadir al-Murabit, and also studied Ibn 'Arabi with Sidi Fudul al-Hurawi in Fes, Morocco. The school of jurisprudence that she follows is Maliki, in as much as it represents the school of early Madina. She follows the Habibiyya branch of the Shadhili Darqawi Sufi Tariqa. Aisha was influenced by her guide and teacher, Shaykh 'Abdlaqadir al-Murabit to translate the meaning of the Qur'ān. The objective of her work is to present a new rendering of the meaning of the Qur'ān which will allow "the meaning of the original as far as possible to come straight through with as little linguistic interface as possible so that the English used does not get in the way of the direct transmission of the meaning."[28] This work is strictly a translation with no commentary and very few notes.

> Men have charge of women because Allah has preferred the one above the other and because they spend their wealth on them. Right-acting women are obedient, safeguarding their husband's interests in his absence as Allah guarded them. If there are women whose disobedience you fear, you may admonish them, refuse to sleep with them, and then beat them. But if they obey you, do not look for a way to punish them. Allah is All-High, Most Great.

Since this a fairly new translation from a 21st-century, C.E. Muslim woman, I expected a more modern and liberal translation of Qur'ān 4:34, based on a woman's

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perspective. Instead, Bewley borrows from Pickthall and Khan: Men have charge of women... and refuse to sleep with them, and then beat them. I also assumed that she would have used simpler and milder language in her translation. In contrast to Omar, the other female translator, Bewely did not soften the language in its interpretation.

However, in reference to translation of the Qur'ān in general, the English is clear and concise. She is noted for not using artificially archaic English. Bewley's rendering of the meaning of the Qur'ān in English can be used as a tool for English speaking reader. To assist in the understanding of Arabic text, she has incorporated Arabic terminology within the translated text itself, and has also included a glossary.

al-Hilali, Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din (b. 1310/1893, died after 1402/1982), and Muhammad Muhsin Khan (b. 1345/1927). Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'ān: A Summarized Version of Al-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir with Comment from Sahih-Al-Bukhari. Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1989-1992. 9 vols. About 4500 pages. Reprinted Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam.

According to Blankinship's work, Al-Hilali was a Moroccan scholar who is now deceased, and may be primarily responsible for the actual translation of the Qur'ān here. Al-Hilali earned his doctorate in the University of Berlin, and taught in universities in Iraq, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. However, he appears to not have had classical *'ulama* training. Khan, a Pakistani of Afghan origin born in Qasur, Punjab, near Lahore, was trained as a medical doctor. However, he had no advanced religious education. He is mainly famous as the translator of al-Bukhari. He also has probably edited and revised the Qur'ān translation of al-Hilali, and added the *aḥādīth* and other material translated by himself. Thus, Khan may be responsible for the translation as much as Al-Hilali.[29]

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Hilali, Taqi-ud-Din, and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, 1392/1972 tr. – mainly Y. Ali, w Pickthall infl.

> Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to God and to their husbands), and guard in the husband's absence what God orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husband's property, etc.). As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful), but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). Surely, God All-High, Most Great.

This translation is becoming very popular in the African American community. It is significant to note that it is a widely distributed translation especially among Salafia Muslims. However, this work is merely a conflation of Yusuf Ali and Pickthall. Unlike Ali and Pickthall translations, this work uses explanatory expansion in the text itself and *ḥadīth* commentary is found in footnotes.

Sometimes the interpreters' opinions changed the meaning of the text. A prime example is the translation of Qur'ān 24:31 which deals with Muslim women's dress. In Khan's and Hilali's translation the translators take the position that it is mandatory for Muslim women to wear face veils, yet a difference in interpretation arises about the exact limits of required covering. The majority of translators take the part of the verse regarding covering "... to display of the adornment only what is apparent" as meaning that what is normally apparent according to custom. This means that the face and hands may be uncovered.[30] Yet, some African American Muslim men who read Khan's and Hilali's translation claim that it is mandatory for women to cover their faces. This is a

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problem for those targeted readers who may choose not to cover their faces but are forced to do so.

Maududi, Abul A'la (1321-1399 / 1903-1979). The Meaning of the Qur'ān. Translated by Chaudhri Muhammad Akbar Muradpuri. Edited by 'Abdul 'Aziz Kamal. Lahore: Islamic Publication (Pvt.) Ltd., 1967-1988. 16 small volumes. 4121 pages. Later republished as 6 larger volumes by Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf at Lahore.

This translation of Maududi's, The Meaning of the Qur'ān, is by Akbar Muradpuri. Muradpuri (d. 1392/1972) and Kamal have been criticized for making changes in Maududi's text. The language is considered weak. This translation is accompanied by the Arabic of the Qur'ān. Akbar translated Vols. I-VII; Kamal translated VIII-XVI and edited those. Akbar did not live to complete the translation.[31] The translation is cited below:

> Men are the managers of the affairs of women because God has made the one superior to the other and because men spend of their wealth on women. Virtuous women are therefore obedient. They guard their rights carefully in their absence under the care and watch of God. As for those women whose defiance you have cause to fear, admonish them and keep them apart from your beds and beat them. Then if they submit to you, do not look for excuses to punish them: note it well that there is God above you, Who is Supreme and Great.

The translator of Maududi's work is the first one in this study to translate *qāwwāmu* to mean manager. According to Maududi's exegesis of this term, *qāwwām* stands for a person who is responsible for the right conduct, safety, and maintenance of the affairs of another individual. African American Muslim women accept this explanation as appropriate. Although the translation of *faḍḍala* : "because God has made the one superior to the other," is borrowed from the orientalist Dawood,

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Maududi's explanation helps to give clarity to the translation. Maududi states that in order for men to carry out their duties, God has given them a degree more or less above women. He states:

> Men are superior to women in the sense that they have been endowed with certain natural qualities that have not been given to women (yet) this is not in the sense that they (men) are above them (women) in honor and excellence.[32]

Maududi's commentary brings clarity to the text, and helps the reader to understand the intended meaning of Allah's revelations. For instance, Maududi states that if a wife is defiant and does not guard her husband's rights then corrective measures should be administered with a sense of proportion according to the nature and extent of the defiance. He states that if light admonishment is effective there is no need to resort to a more severe step. Maududi also relies on authentic *aḥadīth* to show that even though the Prophet reluctantly allowed hitting in extreme cases, he still did not like it. Evidence of this is in Chapter Four. Because of Maududi's exegesis on this verse, African American Muslim women have a better understanding of it. Further, they are not offended by his translation of the text.

Pickthall, Muhammad Marmaduke (1292–1355/1875-1936). The Meaning of the Glorious Koran. New York: Mentor Books, first published 1930, reprinted as a Mentor Book over 35 times, and still in print.

Pickthall, an Englishman who embraced Islam in 1917, undertook this translation under the patronage of the Muslim ruler of Hyderabad in India, the Nizam. Pickthall's

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translation is a revision of Muhammad 'Ali's work, yet it also is influenced by Rodwell and Palmer. This is the second most widely used translation among English-speaking Sunni Muslims after that of Yusuf Ali, and may actually exist in more copies around the world. The work contains an excellent twenty-page introduction that sums up the traditional Muslim view of the Prophet's life relying on authentic early sources. Also, there are helpful explanatory and historical notes in the short introductions that precede many of the chapters. Pickthall uses artificially archaic English and gives such a literal translation that it is almost possible to guess at the Arabic wording from English. There are very few explanatory notes.[33]

> Men are in charge of women, because God hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever High Exalted, Great.

This translation is a revision of MuhammadAli's work with influences from Palmer and Rodwell. Although this work is widely circulated and read throughout the African American Muslim community, the women do not favor this translation of 4:34. Most of them preferred the interpretations of Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Ali. The main problems are those parts of Pickthall's interpretation which are heavily influenced by the orientalists. For instance, Pickthall borrows from Palmer the following... 'Men are in charge of women'. This is gender-biased language, because 'in charge' suggests that men are not only responsible for women but that men have control over women because women are incapable of handling their own affairs and controlling themselves. Further, some interpretations of

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this text imply that men must be in charge because the roles of women are associated with fewer powers and prerogatives than men, therefore *faḍḍala* is interpreted as 'God hath made the one of them to excel the other.' As discussed in examination of the tafsir of Qur'ān 4:34 (in Chapter Four) this is not the best explanation of the verse in question.

Another serious problem with Pickthall's translation is his manner of translating *fa-'iẓūhunna wa-hijurūhunna fī-l-maḍji'i wa-dribūhunna*, to mean 'banish them to beds apart, and scourge them.' As mentioned in my analysis, it is Rodwell who originates the word "scourge" for *wa-dribhūnna*, which has unfavorable connotations. This translation is not consistent with some of the more accurate interpretations. It is more consistent with the ones that are misinterpreted by the orientalists. Therefore, Pickthall's translation is in the same category as those that perpetuate male dominance and sexual asymmetry as universal facts contained in the Qur'ān. Yet the language used in the Qur'ān for the differentiation of roles and responsibilities between men and women centers more on gender mutuality than gender bias.

Based on analysis of these English translations and *tafsīr* of Qur'ān 4:34, this study has shown that most of the translations, whether translated by Muslims or non-Muslims, do not successfully render accurate and comprehensible meaning(s) of Qur'ān 4:34. As proved in this chapter these translations are directly or indirectly influenced by the faulty translations of early Orientalists. Further, this investigation indicated that the some of the introductions found in translations are not informative and are unable to guide the reader through the entire reading process. As a result of these reasons, the reader, whether Muslim or not, may not get the proper understanding of certain exhortations found in many verses

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scattered throughout the Qur'ān. This may be especially true for those verses specific to women or to relations between women and men, and to laws pertaining to marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, and other familial issues.

This chapter, including the four chapters preceding it completes the first part of this study which focused on concepts and theoretical studies of the problems and principles of interpretation, translations and exegesis of Qur'ān 4:34. Furthermore, based on the conclusions in this part of my work, I found that English translations of the sacred text do not convey comprehensive meanings to the reader. And it is the science of exegesis (*tafsīr*), that brings the vital context to translated verses and helps the reader to understand the intended meaning of the sacred text. Now I will proceed to the second part of my study which deals more with practice. How do the readers understand Qur'ān 4:34 and apply it to their everyday life-practices? The second phase, Chapter Six, will investigate how African American Muslim women read, interpret and understand this verse. I intend to determine how they and their families apply Qur'ān 4:34 and how this verse relates to their gender position in real-life situations.

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Endnotes - Chapter Five

[1] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" p. 3.
[2] Tadros, pp. 18-35.
[3] Kidwai, "English Translation of Qur'an", Message International, p. 7.
[4] One of the best references on annotated bibliographies of English translators is Khalid Blankinship, (unpublished work) Murshid Al-Qari: A Reader's Guide to Classical Muslim Religious Literature in English. p. 15-16.
[5] The Dictionary of National Biography, " Ross, Alexander." Vol. xvii, pp. 251-252.
[6] Ross, p. i.
[7] Hans Wehr, Arabic-English Dictionary, p. 800.
[8] ibn 'Abbās, p. 69.
[9] Qurtubi pp. 168-174.
[10] Asad, pp. 110-111.
[11] Kidwai,"English Translation of Qur'an", Message International. p.18.
[12] Nooruddin, p. 53A.
[13] Kidwai, "English Translation of Qur'an", Message International, p. 7.
[14] Kidwai, "English Translation of Qur'an", Message International, p.8.
[15] Kidwai, "English Translation of Qur'an", Message International, p.8.
[16] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" p.8.
[17] Kidwai, "English Translation of Qur'an", Muslim World Book Review. pp.5-6.
[18] Nooruddin, p. 53A.
[19] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" p. 23.
[20] Kidwai, "English Translation of Qur'an", Muslim World Book Review, p.6.
[21] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" p.12.
[22] Nooruddin, p. 53A A.R.
[23] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" pp. 20-22.
[24] Ashfaq Ahmed (no page number, Ahmed biography written by Dr. Falzur Rahman in The Noble Qur'an Tafseer-E-Usmani).
[25] Usmani, p.p. 334-335. n.51.
[26] Al-Nawawi, Riyād bin, Razduq ed. Vol. 1, p. 277, *ḥadīth* 285, originally taken from al-Tirmidhi.
[27] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" p.25.
[28] Bewley, http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Styx/7429/aboutbewley.html; also see Bewley, p. iii.
[29] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" p. 33.
[30] Blankinship, "Hijab Al-Mar'ah, p. 3.
[31] Blankinship, "Murshid al-Qari" p. 23.
[32] Maududi, pp. 121-124, n. 56-57.
[33] Blankinship, p.6. Islamic Books in English Reading List: The Original Sources.

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CHAPTER SIX: HER STORY: HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSLIM WOMEN READ, INTERPRET AND UNDERSTAND THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF QUR'ĀN 4:34

Her Story will never be heard as long as others are the ones to tell it.

This chapter, the final phase of my research, focuses on how African American Muslim women read, interpret and understand the English translation of Qur'ān 4:34. My assumption throughout this entire work is that given African American women's position of struggle and the insight that these women have gained from that struggle, they will be able make sense of verse 4:34. This verse and other Qur'ānic verses, especially 2:229, tell women that men are in charge of them because God has made men "a degree above" women.

As we know, the traditional interpretation of "a degree above" has led to the conclusion that men are unconditionally superior to women. Opponents of Islam invariably point to this verse as the basis of their argument that Islam is oppressive to women. This chapter will show that given the African American women's history of overcoming oppression, along with their continuous quest for justice, they would never adopt a religion or tradition that is inherently oppressive. Rather, the African American woman uses Islam as a means to overcome oppression. To validate this, an African American woman who sees Islam as a weapon against oppression from the larger society, states the following:

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> Allah blessed me with the natural intelligence to choose a way of life that offers me the chance of paradise in the hereafter and relief of burdens in this lifetime. As an African American woman with a Christian background, before reversion I was constantly under assault from the immoral culture. The racism and oppression of this society is a constant, and the protection of Islam is a relief. [1]

With this idea in mind, I will now proceed to discuss my methodology. The method employed to prove my final argument was field research. The primary tool utilized was the long interview. According to Qualitative Research Methods by Grant McCracken, the long interview is necessary for this type of study because it allows the investigator to accomplish their ethnographic objective.[2] My objective was simply to report and document the respondents' understanding of the verse in question. I was able to conduct the interviews without committing to repeated and prolonged involvement in the life and community of the respondents. Additionally, the long interview departs from the group method of qualitative research in that it is conducted between the investigator and the respondent.[3] Consequently, this type of interview allowed me to employ the use of an open-ended questionnaire, which enabled me to maximize the value of time spent with the respondents, as well as the time spent analyzing the data.[4]

My secondary sources are old manuscripts, letters, newspaper clippings, texts and photographs. My field research took place within the Philadelphia Sunni Muslim community. I pre-selected 25 Sunni Muslim women to participate in this study. I purposely chose Sunni or orthodox Muslim women because they depend on the Qur'ān for guidance, and strive to emulate the *Sunnah* of the Prophet in their everyday practice. Therefore their dependency on the *aḥādīth* is much greater than those Muslim women

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who hold that they can interpret the Qur'ān for themselves, and do not incorporate the *Sunnah* into their lives. In addition, Sunni Muslim women also depend on *shari'ah* (Islamic law) and *fiqh* (application of the law). Since the Qur'ān and the *aḥādīth* are the primary sources of Islamic law, their understanding of *aḥādīth* is significant for their overall Islamic lifestyle. Furthermore, these women have a sense of urgency to seek the proper interpretation and explanation of Qur'ān 4:34 from qualified Islamic teachers, in order that their application and practice will be pleasing to their Lord. I am also Sunni Muslim, and these women are from the same general community, in which I have forged relationships with them for more than 10 years. This is significant because I have already established trust with many of the members of the Philadelphia Muslim community. This trust opened the door for honest communication. The respondents were willing to cooperate and shared intimate truth about their understanding of verse Qur'ān 4:34 and its impact on their gendered position within the Muslim family. In many cases they talked about personal experiences (regardless of how painful they were) beyond what was required from the interview. Based on my relationship with these women I found that they really desired to be understood, and to have their voices heard without distortion.

Interviews took place both in their homes and in various masjids. Each interview lasted approximately one and a half hours, with the longest approximately three (3) hours long. Each participant was asked to sign a confidential release form. My interview questions concentrated on how Muslims read, interpret, understand, and apply

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the injunction from Qur'ān verse 4:34 in both their family lives and with society at large.

Married women were asked open-ended questions pertaining to their roles as wives and mothers, and as "individuals" in the context of their negotiation of rights and responsibilities. In certain cases a few males (husbands to female respondents) desired to participate in the interviews. Their wives didn't object, therefore I included their spouse's discussions of their understanding of this verse to provide a broader picture of its impact and influence on the gender roles of African American Muslims. Single women were also asked open-ended questions about the relevancy of this verse to them in their daily lives.

The interview process took approximately one year to complete. I selected and contacted women in the fall of 2001 and conducted interviews throughout the entire academic year. The total interviewing process, including transcribing and analysis of the information from the interviews, was completed in September 2002. As mentioned, the purpose of the interviews was simply to report how African American Muslim women understand the English translation of Qur'ān 4:34 and whether this verse in its practical application is compatible with their interpretation and understanding. I also reported whether their understanding is compatible or close to the exegesis and the most appropriate translation of this verse.

Throughout the following interviews, these women also have addressed the concept of the oppressed Muslim woman and share intimate truth about what they considered as constraints on their individual freedom. Further, the relevancy of

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contemporary gender issues have been addressed in the context of whether these women's maximum rights are limited based on her understanding and application of Qur'ān 4:34.

All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The information included all responses to questions and additional comments that were collected in audio and written formats.

In order adequately to document my findings and the overall results of this field research, I have divided my work into three phases or voices. The first voice represents the legacy of struggle and resistance that African American women bring with them when making the willing choice to embrace Islam as their way as life. The second voice represents their connection to three distinct traditional Muslim groups, namely *Addeynu Allahe, Quba* and *Dar-ul-Islam.* This voice will speak to the historical background and demographic composition of the three distinct traditional Muslim groups. The third voice is the most crucial of all because it is the voice of the Muslim woman herself speaking intimate truths on issues of gender, marriage, sexuality and the interaction between male and female as it relates to her understanding of Qur'ān 4:34. I hope that these voices validate my work with evidence that women have made sense of this verse and prove that their understanding is consistent the most appropriate explanation of the English translation of Qur'ān 4:34.

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Pioneer Sunni Muslim women of Addeynu Allahe, circa 1936.

Contemporary Sunni Muslim women: "Keepers of the flame..."

Only the black woman can say when and where I enter in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood without violence and without suing or special patronage then and there the whole ...race enters with me.[5]

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The preceding quote reveals the immense and moral power black women possessed and sought to wield throughout their history,[6] and it is this history that that African American women bring with them when they enter into the fold of Islam.

The first voice below is of an African American woman who tells of this legacy of struggle and resistance as one of the strengths that African American women bring with them when they embrace Islam. This voice represents her acceptance of womanist nature, maternal ways, strengths, emotions and flexibilities. Her voice speaks of the significance of womanhood and motherhood that is embedded in the moral fiber of African American women. Yet she also tells us of her needs and why she must embrace Islam. For she believes that Islam is the only system of belief that can accommodate all her needs as a human being, and free her from the matrix of dominance and the chains and images of psychological slavery.

> *Who am I and what does it mean to you?*
> *I am a Muslim black woman. An oxymoron? Not quite!*
> *Strong sojourner who can create from Allah's bounty finite satisfactions of needs and many provisions of wants. Tall, 4 feet 7 inches, invincible at 87 pounds or 350 lbs.; in a wheel chair or crutches, formidable warrior if children or mate are made prey.*
>
> *She is the one who has an answer to every question and a palatable solution to every problem. Often denied for her ability to survive, she can do nothing less, for she is the black woman who has accepted her station. She is entered but she cannot enter. She nurtures and soothes as no man can. She is the first teacher and the last pupil to leave. She gives respect when faced with challenging odds and will kill for the greater good. I rely on my Lord for his mercy and strength for with all my perceived strength I am weak, vulnerable and needy. I relish in the fact that I pray to our Lord / my Lord who sustains me and will (He promised) reward me for doing my duties. Getting paid for a job, I want to do... Mothering, nurturing, educating comforting and supporting.*

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Only Allah can give us this back. Only in Islam is there a guarantee of success for raising a chaste and worshipful child. Only in Islam does Allah reveal the preciousness of women, Al-NISA and how she must be cherished and cared for. That is why I believe: Only Allah knows the trouble I've seen and the pain I carry. Memory, particularly genetic memory is powerful. We know those who were with us in the Jennah and we cleave to them. They give us a comfort like no other. That is just a minute portion of the grace and mercy from our / my Lord. I fear and love Allah to my limit, which is nowhere befitting of His Majesty. I owe Him all and He owes me nothing. My salvation is belief in Him as my SOVEREIGN LORD who has no partners or associates and believing in the man and message of the Prophet Muhammad as his last messenger and apostle to mankind!

Only Allah will suffice me both here and in the hereafter. Insha Allah I will be raised among the truly faithful and forbearing for His sake. Ameen"[7]

To substantiate this voice, research tells us that historically women of African descent have over a 400-year legacy of being able to handle the pain of oppression and of balancing it as they fought to resist. And at the same time, these women were able to maximize any opportunity to empower themselves. Dr. Katie Cannon, author of *Black Womanist Ethics* observes:

> Throughout the history of America of the United States, the interrelationship of white supremacy and male superiority has characterized women of African American descent's reality as a situation of struggle ... a struggle to survive in two contradictory worlds simultaneously, one white, privileged, and oppressive, and the other black exploited and oppressed.[8]

According to Patricia Hill Collins in her book, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and Politics of Empowerment*, all African American women share the common experience of being black women in a society that denigrates women of African descent. This commonality of experience suggests that certain characteristic themes will be prominent in black women's perspective, and the most significant theme

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is this legacy of struggle, which is the common thread binding African American women. Therefore, it is this legacy of struggle and resistance against the institutions of racism and sexism that has resulted in the black woman's survival and ability to find relief from the pain and horror directed at her. Yet, this legacy should not suggest that she is this "super strong black woman" who is always willing and prepared to resist all oppression on all fronts. Nor should it suggest that she is heroic or a victim. Both perceptions would be yet another oppressive assault on her womanhood. To suggest this would foster the perception that the black woman needs no help because she can take it, or she is so helpless and hopeless she could never resist.[9] To further substantiate my point, the following will examine the ways that African American Muslim women balance, mediate and resist conflict, based on Hill Collins' theory on the "matrix of dominance." According to Hill Collins, the "Matrix of Dominance" is an alternative theory, which allows one to gain an understanding of the experience of discrimination and oppression. The crucial point of the theory is that there are axes of dominance such as race, gender and class that interlock together to cause oppression. This matrix is structured by the intersection of these axes. There is no hierarchy, and none of the axes have primacy over the others. [10] This theory holds that black women know how to resist oppression by ways that are empowering. Collins claims in her work that black women have capacities for self-definition, determination, and valuation that allow them to mediate and resist oppression. She states that once you can identify that there is no one axis that causes oppression, then women can begin to understand how they can

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resist and mediate the oppression of discrimination through self-definition, self-valuation and determination. [11] Dr. Kate Cannon supports Collins' work. She states:

> Black womanist ethos embraces three basic dimensions of invisible grace, quiet grace, and unstated courage. These are the qualities essential for self-valuation and self-definition. [12]

For Collins and Cannon, self-valuation and self-definition are crucial weapons against oppression. Self-definition allows the black woman to move from victimization to a free mind and a free spirit. When black women define themselves, they reject images and stereotypes from others. In addition, these women reject structures that are placed on them by those who assume authority over them and /or think they have the right to interpret their reality. Therefore, self-definition replaces negative images with positive ones. With this idea in mind, when black women invoke Afrocentric worldviews and live by those ideals, they become empowered. Moreover, Collins explains that black feminist theory, which is a self-conscious struggle that empowers men and women to have a humanistic view of community, should be part of their worldview. From this assertion one should gain a humanistic view, which helps black women avoid abuse. [13]

The author also discusses other ways that black women can resist the "Matrix of Dominance." They are as follows:

1. Doing something unexpected,
2. Being silent on the outside but not submitting to oppression on the inside,
3. Living two lives, including developing a private and safe space, a place to be free, to have a sense of belonging,
4. Self-valuation, bonding with sisterhood, developing self-respect for self and others. Sisterhood, as well as black literary tradition, offers an alternative worldview. In the sisterhood women are more accountable for themselves and others.

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5. Self-reliance, determination and persistence help black women to cope, mediate and resist the matrix of dominance.[14]

Based on the acceptance of Collins' resistance strategies, black women should enhance their feeling of self-esteem and self worth, and know that God created them fully human. This ability to resist along with the legacy of struggle is what African Americans bring with them to the fold of Islam. They bring with them their history of overcoming oppression, along with their continuous quest and need for justice.

As previously stated, African American women have been visited against their will with a struggle that has never ended; hence, their consciousness of the meaning of struggle has been well established. Yet, through it all, these women are able to find relief within the struggle itself. And this is the advantage that African American women bring with them when they enter into the fold of Islam. They come with the attitude, disposition and wisdom to know that with every difficulty there is relief.

Subsequently, the motivation of their struggle in Islam is their trust in God, for they believe that their God is not an oppressive God; therefore, they are compelled to find common sense, understanding and application, as it relates to this verse in particular, and Islamic family law in general.

The Second Voice, His-Story and Her Connection: Islam and the African American Encounter.

> *In the absence of the Griot the story will not be told. The history will not be recorded with impartiality. There will be others, whose advantage will be sought, who will clothe facts, figures, and details. They will embellish the surreal and add emphasis to the superfluous. We must record our history.*[15]

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Some of the Muslim women who participated in the interviewing process are fourth generation Muslims, whose family backgrounds date back to Islamic activity in the 1930's. These early pioneers of Orthodox or Sunni Islam were those African Americans involved in civil rights and black liberation movements. They saw Islam as an answer to segregation and discrimination, and as newly converted Muslims they took a firm stand against racism. Other indigenous Americans came into Islam by way of the jazz or music route. Many of the Muslims during the late 1940's were musicians. During that time, African American Muslims were affiliated with one of the earliest Sunni groups Addeynu Allahe Universal Arabic Association, Inc. Other women in this field research are connected to orthodox groups whose Islamic activities date back to the 1940's.

The remainder of the women in this field research were at one time or another affiliated with either the Dar ul-Islam movement, or the International Muslim Brotherhood, known today as The Quba Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (both are Sunni Muslim groups). The ideology of these groups centers on traditional Islamic principles as opposed to the nationalist theologies of the Nation of Islam and other contemporary pseudo-Islamic organizations. Based on the interviews and data collected from some of the pioneers of these communities, the following is their account of the historical background of the aforementioned groups.

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Addeynu Allahe Universal Arabic Association

Addeynu Allahe's pioneers, circa 1936. The founder, Professor Ezaldeen is the second man from the left in the stripped garment.

Addeynu Allahe Universal Arabic Association (AAUAA) was one of the first Sunni Orthodox Islamic Groups in the African American Muslim community. This orthodox Sunni group is the source of some of the later orthodox groups, which are prominent in Philadelphia today.

The original mission of AAUAA was to develop self-sufficient rural communities whose political autonomy was constitutionally guaranteed. The association envisioned the idea of Islamic *hijra (*migration*)*, whereby these rural communities were to be governed by Islamic shari'ah and become economically self-sufficient.[16]

This idea was first conceived in 1936 by its founder, an African American Muslim, the late Sheikh Muhammad Ezaldeen. He was a native of Pennsylvania, and an

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early member of the Moorish Americans. The Moorish Americans were the first in Muslim tradition to formulate the idea of self-governed rural communities. Sheikh Ezaldeen was instrumental in carrying out these ideas. Muhammad Ezaldeen was also a college graduate with a Master's degree in English. He was a teacher and elementary school principal by profession. Because of his educational, academic and professional background, he was also known as, "Professor Ezaldeen."

Unlike the Moorish American ideology, which was centered more in nationalistic concepts and theories, and less on orthodox Islamic ritual, Professor Ezaldeen focused more on the latter. Around the year 1929, during a time when crises disrupted the Moorish Science Temple, Professor Ezaldeen took the opportunity to further his Islamic education in Egypt.[17]

Based on personal interviews with Hajj Musa, a disciple of Sheikh Ezaldeen, and an early pioneer of Ezaldeen Village, Professor Ezaldeen studied in Egypt for approximately six years, 1930-1936. There was some research that stated that he studied at Al-Azhar; however, Hajj Musa has documented proof that Sheikh Ezaldeen studied at The General Centre of the World Association of Muslim Youngmen in Cairo. The general objectives of this association were to prepare Muslims to be faithful to God, loyal to their nationality, tenacious in holding to Islamic doctrines, and good followers of its rules and behavior with the ultimate objective of insuring world peace.[18]

Hajj Musa has in his possession their official handbook with photographs of Professor Ezaldeen, which establishes the fact that he studied there. He also has a copy of the following original AAUAA handbook:[19]

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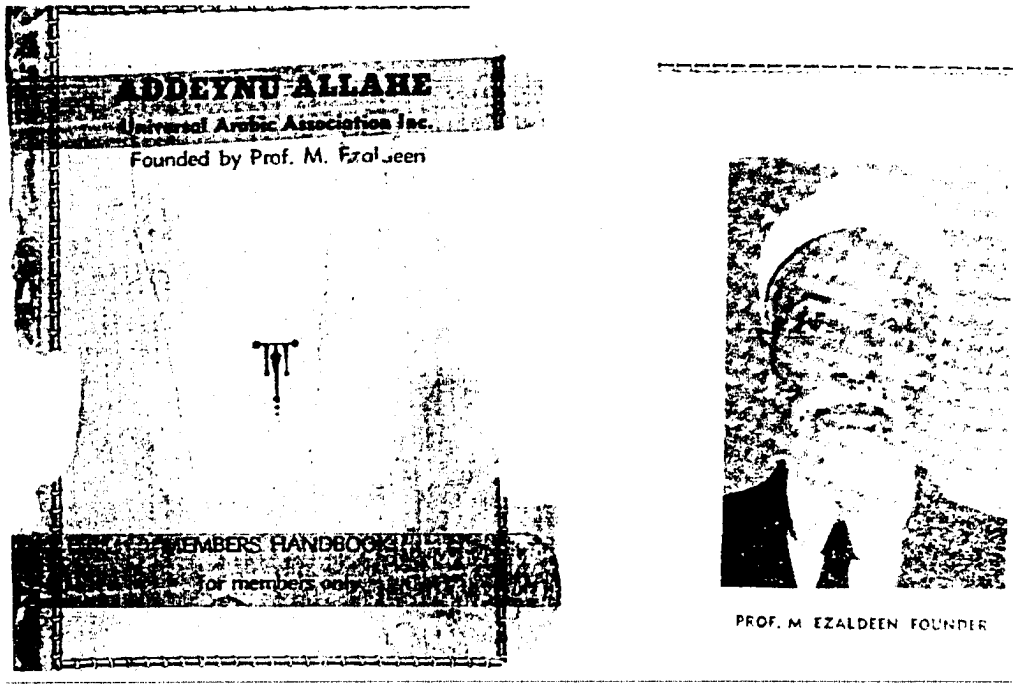

At the Muslim Association in Cairo, Sheikh Ezaldeen studied Arabic, hieroglyphics, Qur'ān, *tafsīr*, and other Islamic studies and sciences. After six years of intensive Islamic studies, he returned to America and officially formed the AAUAA group. Drawing on his intense studies in Cairo, the professor lectured and taught Arabic, *tafsīr*, Qur'ān and other Islamic studies to his followers.

According to Hajj Musa, he brought a dual message. First, he called the people of the association who had lost their history back to recognize that they were descendants of Hagar and Ishmael. Therefore, they were not Black, or African American, but were Hamitic Arabs. Secondly, since they were considered as Hamitic Arabs, their natural religion was Al-Islam. Sheikh Ezaldeen promoted this dual message as a major part of the overall ideology of the association.

However, this ideology aroused some dissension and controversy during the formative years of the AAUAA. The primary concern was that some Muslims assumed

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that the sheikh was not teaching true orthodox Islam. However, his followers accepted this message because they understood the connection. Sheikh Ezaldeen was trying to instill in his followers that they were not just slaves. They had a history that dated back to Hagar and Ishmael. So, they accepted his understanding, and based on this, they considered themselves Muslims. Hence, with this concept, the sheikh and his followers persevered in trying to establish economically-independent rural communities that were ideally governed by the Islamic shari'ah.

Professor Ezaldeen had many supporters and followers throughout the various cities in the United States who favored the concept of the Islamic *hijra*. Subsequently, these followers became members of the association, purchased acres of land in rural communities, constructed family dwellings, built their own mosques and Islamic schools, grew their own food, and successfully maintained morally viable and economically independent Muslim communities. These communities flourished for several years.

The headquarters of the association were located in Hammonton, New Jersey, outside of Philadelphia, in a community known today as Ezaldeen Village. The other locations were in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Newark, New Jersey; Buffalo, New York; West Valley, New York; Jacksonville, Florida; Rochester, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; Columbus, Ohio; Whiteboro, New Jersey; and Youngstown, Ohio. However, it is Ezaldeen Village, and the Philadelphia location that this work is most interested in for the following reasons:

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1. Some of the Muslim women in my study are 2nd, 3rd, or 4th generation Muslims, whose Islamic family backgrounds date back to the Islamic activity of the AAUAA.
2. Some of the later pioneers of Ezaldeen Village became members of the International Muslim Brotherhood, and established an organization called Masjid Al Muhaajireen, which is an offshoot of AAUAA.
3. The founder of Quba Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, the late Nafea Muhaimin, also resided at Ezaldeen Village.
4. Other members of Quba also, at one time or another lived in the village.

The facts on the progress of Ezaldeen Village are somewhat limited; however, what is documented is that in 1943 Ezaldeen Village was designated as the major project for a self-sufficient Muslim community. This community hosted the first all Muslim and Arab convention as a means to unite other Muslim groups. However, most of these groups did not support the idea of Islamic *hijra*, therefore, did not join or support AAUAA.[20]

From that time period to 1955, the AAUAA struggled to financially maintain its communities. They were faced with legal and internal problems. Some of the original pioneers' families either died, or left the community.[21] In 1955, Professor Ezaldeen died[22], leaving only two remaining families in the village.[23] These families were striving hard to bring unity among the existing communities. During this time, Professor Ezaldeen's wife asked Hajj Musa to support their efforts in granting charters to other organizations. Although Hajj Musa made every effort to assist, he was also faced with various problems so Ezaldeen Village was unable to successfully continue their plans.

At this time Hajj Musa left for Mecca to fulfill the obligation of Hajj, returning to Ezaldeen Village in 1963. He built a new home, and until 1971, was instrumental in helping Ezaldeen Village acquire more land. Ultimately, Hajj Musa and his followers

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established Masjid Al Muhaajireen. The mission was also to call Muslims back to the land, to grow their own food, and to become self-sufficient. The objectives of the organization were similar to the ideas of Professor Ezaldeen in that they would operate under the guidelines of *tawheed* and family law. This new organization differed in that they wanted to function as a legal organization within the confines of the American legal system. The name was changed because Ad-deynu Allahe was grammatically incorrect. Based on the rules of Arabic grammar there was no need for the definite article in the title. However, there were other branches of the association in northern New Jersey, which remained under the original name.

In the late nineties, Hajj Musa resigned from the organization due to his frequent trips to Egypt. During this time, the Ezaldeen community began to decline. Although the headquarters is still there, Ezaldeen Village has ceased to function. Nevertheless, some of its vision, especially as it relates to Muslims developing their own food supply, continues to live through the hard work of Hajj Musa. He has taken the knowledge of growing organic foods from the rural community to the city. Presently at Quba Institute, where he is instrumental in the institution's total operation, he has developed and maintains through the use of compost an organic garden as a means for Muslims to have their own food supply. He is available to teach other Muslim communities how to grow organically. For Hajj Musa, this is what he considers a key strategy for the future survival of the Muslim community.[24]

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The late Imam Nafea Muhaiman and family, circa 1974.

Quba Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies is one of the oldest existing Sunni Muslim organizations in Philadelphia today. Quba is an extension of the International Muslim Brotherhood, which was established in 1949.[25] The Brotherhood, as it is commonly called today, originally functioned as an informational citadel for pioneering Islamic communities throughout the tri-state area of Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey. In its genesis, efforts were primarily concentrated on disseminating information about Islam informally in a community-based environment.

In 1960, the late Sheikh Nafea Muhaimin, the founder of Quba Institute, accepted Islam and began attending the International Brotherhood. Under the direction of immigrant Muslims from the Brotherhood, The Sheikh was very committed to properly learn the Islamic way of life. He encouraged international Muslim scholars and

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graduate students to teach Arabic and Islamic studies to the early indigenous African American Muslim members.

However, the Islamic and Arabic instruction from the immigrants sometimes presented a language and cultural barrier for some of the African American Muslims. As the African American membership increased rapidly at the Brotherhood, the Sheikh realized the need for a more conventional Islamic educational program specifically tailored to the needs of the indigenous Muslims. In response to this, The Quba School for Islamic Studies became the educational branch of the International Brotherhood in 1968. In the following year Sheikh Nafea became the Imam of the International Brotherhood and began teaching Islam.

Because of his faith and understanding of Islam, his deep concern for his fellow Muslims, and to assist them in properly learning "true Islam," he accepted a scholarship in 1973 to study Arabic, Qur'ānic Recitation and Islamic Sciences at the University of Medina. In 1974, his wife and children joined him in Medina. Within four years his eldest son, Anwar Muhaimin became at the age of 15 the first African American to memorize the entire Qur'ān. Today, he is considered as a world-league scholar. His brother Anas memorized over half the Qur'ān and also trained in Islamic law. The works and sacrifices of the Muhaimin family led Quba to initiate a full-time day school and adult classes in 1992 where Muslims may acquire Islamic knowledge essential to their practice of their religion. The Muhaimins' accomplishments were seen as encouragement for all African American Muslims in their effort to learn Arabic and the *deen* of Islam.

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Sheikh Nafea Muhaimin died in February 1995, but prior to his death his vision came to fruition. The Quba Institute became a comprehensive learning environment that emphasizes holistic development. Quba continues to operate by Nafea's original educational philosophy that is grounded in the formation of a balanced curriculum of Islamic and secular knowledge. It was created as, and still is, an inclusive educational center. The Institute prides itself on being the "hub" of Islamic knowledge in the indigenous Muslim community. In following Sheikh Nafea's visionary leadership, the Quba Institute has remained committed to the delivery of a progressive educational platform, utilizing the Holy Qur'ān as the focal point from which all instruction emanates.[26]

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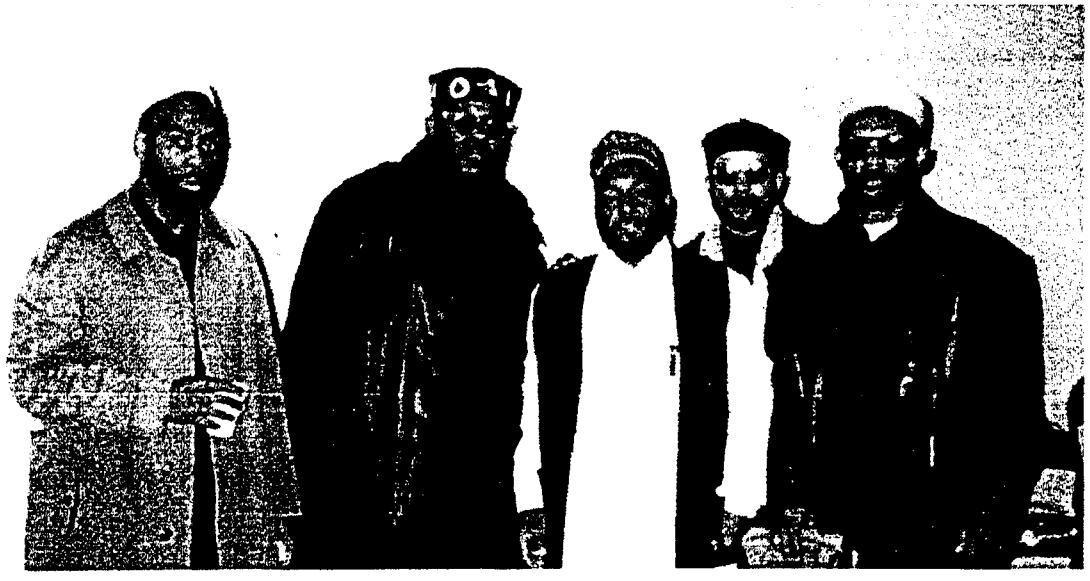

Imam Asim (center) and members of Masjid Mujahiddeen, an extension of Dar-ul Islam

The words *Dar-ul Islam* simply means "Abode of Islam". Islam means the complete submission to the will of Allah, and subsequently Islam also means peace with Allah. Thus, "Dar-ul Islam means an abode of peace, or a territory or a domain where people are in submission to Allah. Or simply put, it means the area where Islam is practiced and enforced, whether it is in one's personal fulfillment of the commandments of Allah, or as a group collectively enforcing Allah's law in their social relations.

The idea of *Dar-ul Islam* was first conceived in 1962 by three indigenous Muslims from New York (Rajab Mahmud, Ishaq Abdush Shaheed and Yahya Abdul Kareem.) These men were responding to the needs of indigenous Muslims during that time period. There was dissatisfaction among African American Muslims with foreign

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leadership and control. They felt a need to mobilize indigenous Muslims in order to implement Islam by the tradition of the Prophet. They set out to implement *Dar-ul-Islam* in its traditional sense by first realizing the need for a central head or authority who would lead the community in accordance with sound Muslim principles. In adhering to these tenets, several Muslims and their families united and organized under the head of an Imam or central authority based on the Qur'ān and *hadīth* . The men and women were enthusiastic in emulating the historic Sunni Muslim men and women and embracing the traditional gender roles. They accepted the *Sunnah* dress that demonstrated a stark contrast to western gender stereotypes. They also accepted the gender roles and the division of labor as defined in Qur'ān 4:34.

The *Dar-ul-Islam* community established *salat* or the five daily prayers and *jumah* or congregational prayer in their own mosque in New York. Community institutions grew to meet the need of the growing population. One of the primary organizations formed was RAD, a paramilitary/security group. RAD was formed to protect the lives and property of the community. According to my field research, RAD was the foundation of the brotherhood because most of the "brothers" in Dar-ul-Islam came from the "sixties" (the revolutionary era) and they were militant by necessity.

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Muslim schools (*madrasahs)* were developed. The Islamic curriculum consisted of courses in the fundamentals of Islam (*mubadi'*), the life of the Prophet (*seerah*) of the Prophet, Qur'ānic recitation, and other Islamic courses. They also opened meat markets for ritually slaughtered and prepared (*halal*) meats, along with an employment service (*dar-ul Miska*).

Dar-ul-Islam was the first movement to go into the prisons and give information about Islam (*dawah*) to Muslim converts. They were some of the first indigenous Muslims to develop and organize sensitivity programs necessary to inform businesses, employers, and schools about the religious obligations of Muslims.

To the founders, *Dar-ul-Islam* was a political entity, but only in the sense that Qur'ān and S*unnah* were the guiding political principles. They utilized this to establish morally viable families that resulted in spiritually guided Muslim communities. This was the beginning of the Dar-ul-Islam movement. Its ideas and concepts spread beyond the expectations of the founders. African American people began to accept Islam in large numbers. New mosques were established from New York to Philadelphia, to major cities in Virginia and Florida as well to other urban cities in America. Endnote hadi

In Philadelphia, the movement began in 1969 when representatives from the New York headquarters came to existing communities in Philadelphia. They met with the International Muslim Brotherhood and the Afro American Islamic *ummah* to present a planned program that would establish a network of indigenous orthodox Muslim communities. The goal was to unite these groups into one unified body under one imam. While the leaders of each community declined to join the movement, some

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members from each community did accept the challenge to establish *Dar-ul-Islam* in Philadelphia

These men elected an imam, [27] obtained a building in Germantown, Masjid Mujahideen, and thus Dar-ul-Islam was born. From 1969 to 1974 the Dar moved from Germantown to North Philadelphia and settled then in the West Philadelphia area. The Masjid was now called Ash Shuhud, where the movement grew from 13 families to 150 families.

At this time the Dar was the only masjid in the city that was open twenty-four hours a day, where the Muslim families and the entire *ummah* was called to prayer by a *muhadhin* (one who calls the adhan or call to prayer) by a loud speaker. A rigorous educational program was initiated for children and adults. A *shura* or council of leaders was instituted, and a judiciary board and other organizational structures were developed. These were designed to ensure that these Muslim families served Islam and lived in accordance with the teachings and traditions of the Prophet.

From 1979 to 1982, after ten years of struggle and tension, the *Dar-ul-Islam* fell into a decline, which led to the breakup of the movement. In the early eighties, one of the founders declared that the Dar had ceased and now was part of the International *Jama'at al Fuqrah.* The founder abdicated his authority and leadership (and his former followers now considered themselves Sufi.) This transition caused the Philadelphia chapter of Dar to follow suit. In 1982, the imam and director of the *Dar-ul-Islam,* Masjid Ash Shuhud also relinquished his authority to *Jama'at Fuqrah.* However the entire community did not make this drastic transition and attempts were made to

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continue the concept of *Dar-ul-Islam.*

That same year several Dar members from Masjid Ash Shuhud and the community at 22nd Street, along with the community in Chester, Pennsylvania, organized themselves and founded what we know today as Masjid Mujahideen, located in West Philadelphia. Their mission is to preserve believing families within a morally viable *ummah.* They are pledged to fulfill the duties imposed upon them by Allah, to propagate Islam, and to explain its teachings and doctrines. Although Dar-ul-Islam with its original concepts and ideas ceased operations,[28] the existence of the organization and the dedicated Muslim families who assisted in its formation represents one of the first movements of this type in United States history. The movement was a true Sunni Muslim community of indigenous Muslims.[29]

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The Third Voice: The Struggle of Muslim Women to be Understood

Interview Results: Muslim Women Recounting their Understanding of Qur'ān 4:34

The primary focus of this final part of my work is to report the responses about how the targeted readers understand the English translation of the meaning of Qur'ān 4:34. As described in the beginning of this chapter, the respondents were asked questions concerning the English translations most frequently read. They were also asked if they relied solely on the English translations, or referred to *tafsīr* and other sources for further explanations and clarifications of the verse as well. The participants were asked general questions about their understanding of Islam, in conjunction with personal questions regarding familial, educational, and professional circumstances. This was done to demonstrate the diversity among the target readers, and how their environment has impacted upon their understanding of the verse in question. Now I will proceed with the results of the interviewing process by first quoting the two most frequently read translations of the verse in question, then proceeding with the respondents' perspectives with respect to the clarity of the translations, the purpose of the interpretation, and the understanding of each line of the verse.

English Translation of the Meaning of Qur'ān 4:34, Yusuf Ali:

> Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat

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them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance): for God is Most High, Great (above you all). [30]

Pickthall:

Men are in charge of women, because God hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever High Exalted, Great. [31]

Respondents' Comments on Clarity of English Translations

Much of what the respondents expressed concerning these English translations and others read by them validates my argument that English translations regarding the Qur'ānic verse 4:34 do not render a comprehensive meaning. The majority of the women stated that this verse lacked lucidity. Consequently, they chose *tafsīr* or other sources for clarification. They all agreed that the problem of misunderstanding this verse originates with the English translation. Generally the respondents stated in the interview that the overall translation is ambiguous. Some individuals who stated that only some segments were precise. There was at least one respondent who asserted that the verse translation was lucid, and there was no need for *tafsīr*. However, the consensus among most of the respondents was that the English translation cannot stand singularly and must rely on *tafsīr* to bring the vital context to the meaning of the verse.

One respondent is a professional nurse, married to an influential Muslim leader in the Philadelphia *ummah*, who has also studied Arabic and lived in Egypt states. She is

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of the opinion that one needs qualified teachers when approaching the Qur'ān. She declared:

> ...Islam is a religion that was, and still is an oral religion (Islam was preserved both by oral and written preservation), and it requires teachers. As Muslims, we are supposed to have teachers. It (Islam) is a religion that is taught. It isn't learned by reading everything. You have to have a teacher to explain the Shari'ah (law) over circumstances that surrounded those events when this verse was revealed. ...you can't just seek it out yourself, like some people do with verse 4:34 and try to read, interpret, understand, and apply it to marriage life. You need further explanation.

One respondent, a single young adult Muslim woman who is a second year university student works as a peer counselor at a local university. She is one of three Muslim children living with Christian parents who did not rear them as Muslim but respect their way of life. She sees Islam as, "the faculty by which humans live and reason. To worship God is the reason we are here. Islam is more than a way of life; it is a responsibility to oneself."

She also stated:

> At first I depended solely on the English translation due to the lack of knowledge of the Arabic language. After studying the Arabic language, I learned that the English translation of certain words gives no justice to the actual meaning in Arabic, although they do have certain situations that they may be applicable to. I now depend on *tafsīr* or exegesis.

Another respondent, a dental assistant, married for 19 years with two adult female children, one a practicing Muslim, and one a non-practicing Muslim, has the following comment pertaining to Islam which also gives her perspective in reference to the clarity of the English translation.

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> Islam gives you accountability, and it gives purpose to your life. For everything that you do, if you do it for the sake of Allah, you know you will be rewarded. Islam puts things in focus, puts things right. It gives you an understanding of the hereafter. So you must live your life fully everyday. You must keep striving for the sake of Allah. You cannot take too many things for granted.

Regarding the verse, she expressed how she feels when she hears this verse without further explanation:

> I don't like hearing it at a wedding in a mixed crowd. Only because it doesn't lend to interpretation or explanation. It's just said, and reading the verse and assuming everybody understands it. Especially if their relationship is not going so well. Um, especially with non-believers and non-Muslims, when they hear this, first thing they say, 'Huh, he ain't going to beat me. I'm not going to obey him!' Because these are the ladies of the eighties, and the nineties and of the millennium.

Another respondent seems to think this verse is clear, with one exception. She is a software engineer, married for four years, with a combined family of five children. She was raised in a Muslim family, the granddaughter of the first African American man to make Hajj. Her understanding of Islam is as follows:

> Allah is One, without partners. He begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like unto Him. It's what the Christians and Jews call the First Commandment. It is the heart, the root, the basis, and the core of Islam. Without it, you cannot call yourself a Muslim, no matter how much Arabic terminology or imagery you use.

About the verse she said:

> It all seems clear. The only ambiguous part is where it says that He has made "one of you" to excel the other. It's funny how we always assume that refers to men.

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Her thought is similar to the modern scholars who find the same ambiguity in this part of the verse. However, in contrast to most of the responses above, the another woman echoes that it does not matter whether the verse is clear to her or not:

> I can't say I understand exactly what it means, but me not understanding it does not mean that I can't submit to it.

One of the women, who reads Arabic *tafsīr* stated that it brings clarity, she also had this to say about the English translation:

> It is clear. Everything I read in the Qur'ān is very clear, even in English, because I know what Allah wants us to do, and we know there's no way in the world that Allah wants you to beat up on each other.

She further emphasized:

> I think when people first embrace Islam they depend on those who seem to have more knowledge or can read Arabic, but it is more than that. It is your sincerity. It is what is in your heart. You must find it in your heart, and then the understanding will come. I always tell my children you may hear and see a lot, but if what you hear and see touches your heart, then you know that it is right.

Two other respondents are police officers, recently married and recent converts to Islam. As a lieutenant, she is his superior and he is a detective. They see Islam as the truth. These two respondents oppose the last respondent's comments stated above. They do not believe that everything they read in the Qur'ān is clear, especially regarding verse 4:34. They give real life situations to substantiate their comments:

> The wife: Based on reading without any support, it doesn't sit well at all with me. I don't believe that this is what Allah is really saying to us (women). I don't believe that Allah sanctions the beating of his creations, of all his children. Some parts of this verse are not really clear at all. I think the verse is oppressive without any commentary and further explanation. People use this verse against us to make men look like tyrants and women subservient, and that is the situation now. And

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> they (others outside of Islam) concentrate on this verse. You hear this verse over and over again by others. They never look at the truth of Islam.
>
> The husband: Based in English, it may seem to be oppressive to women somewhat, but you can't just look at that English translation. Islam has so many tools, so many resources. In Islam, there is a pool of knowledge. You can't focus on this one verse or one thing. You can't stay there. You have to reflect, you have to think, you have to go beyond and look for clarity. If you don't understand this verse yourself, you have to go ask others, a scholar or a well-informed Muslim for the explanation of this verse.

Both of them recalled how this verse impacts on real life situations:

> We think that it is a problem to pick up that verse and say I can beat my wife. As police officers we know there are some Muslim men locked up for beating their wives, and they actually believe that they have the 'power' to 'discipline' their wife like that, and they further that ignorance to others. That is the first thing that comes out of their mouths. 'You can't lock me up. I can't be arrested for this. This is my religion.' There was an officer who said to us 'well that is their religion', and we said no, it is a problem. This misunderstanding is a problem.

A Muslim woman in a monogamous marriage with three children stated that she does not depend on the English translation:

> We get someone to translate it from Arabic, someone who speaks Arabic and who is much more knowledgeable, like a ḥāfiz, [one who has memorized the Qur'an]. A ḥāfiz is someone who has knowledge to give an opinion.

Her husband, a student of Arabic, and an actuary by profession stated:

> I am a student of the Arabic language and I realize that understanding Arabic really does help me to understand this verse.

This Muslim woman, a retired teacher, concluded by concurring with the previous couples' comments:

> See you have to seek further information in regards to this verse. You have to look and read more. You must or have to read or learn on your

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> own. You can't rely on your husband for your sole source of education. My understanding of Islam is that you learn from the cradle to the grave. You must seek knowledge from here to China. So, how and why do you only rely on your husband as your sole source of information? Why are all these books being published? Why do we have *aḥādīth*? *Tafsīr*? – we have to read them.

Again, these responses give evidence to my work that the controversy surrounding this verse originates with the English translation. As aforementioned, in real life situations, there are Muslim men and women who tend to believe that the English translation of the meaning of Qur'ān verse 4:34 has scriptural authority. Therefore, to these Muslims, the translated text is an absolute command from God and it is God Himself who has given men unquestionable superiority over women. As a result of this gross misunderstanding, some men are unkind to their wives and treat them unfairly both in their private and public lives. Or, at least they use the verse as an excuse to continue to mistreat their wives in ways that they have been accustomed to.

Now, I will proceed to report the target reader's responses to the objective of this verse. After that, I will report their responses on how they understand, with the support of *tafsīr* and other resources, the most controversial concepts in each line of this verse.

Respondent Comments on the Objective of the Verse

Like the early *mufassirūn*, most of the respondents view this verse as primarily concerned with the allocation and differentiation of roles and responsibilities of men and women in general. They agree with the fact that it is God who has defined the division

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of labor between men and women, including their domestic relations. Some of the respondents recognize that the way God raised the level of differentiation is important to building and maintaining long-term relationships. They believe God knew that in any marital relationship there might be harmony between partners, as well as conflict, problems, and contempt for one another – emotional "gridlock". Gridlock is the point at which they ask themselves "Should we divorce or not?" They understand that this verse is a remedy before divorce. They understand that He created and endowed human beings with certain noble faculties. He reminds humans of this in this verse, especially men, that they have the ability to remain rational and fair when marital discord occurs. If both parties are willing to follow the injunctions given in the verse, this verse will serve, as intended, as a panacea for divorce.

The following responses should bear evidence that the women understand the objective of the verse.

The first respondent is a divorcee, married three times, both in polygynous and monogamous marriages, with six practicing Muslim children. She attended college for three years, and works at a major university in Philadelphia in the school of psychology. She is also co-author and publisher of a book on the discipline of black children. Her opinion is:

> This verse is relevant to me in the sense that it gives men, me and my daughter a guideline in which Muslims should follow when they are in a situation of marital duress or any marital relationship in general. The commentary talks about how we should behave. We should not be yelling at each other and rude to each other. We should behave as though we are always in Allah's presence. How would we be in Allah's presence, calling each other foul names when we are angry? This gives more

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> evidence that we should bring in family arbitrators and set forth to reason things out before it leads to divorce.

A young married Muslim woman with three children, who is a full-time Amtrak employee and a part time college student stated:

> From my understanding of this verse, reference to marriage and general relationships, men and women have different roles, and Allah in the Qur'ān makes reference to differentiate roles and obligations that we have as Muslims, as individuals, as husbands, and wives, as mothers, fathers, and as children. Because we wear a lot of hats, I think Allah makes reference to what we are supposed to do in different situations. Everyone has a job to do.

One male respondent said:

> This overall verse – a relief for men and women because it is a truth if you understand it through Qur'ānic terms. This verse is a true representation or expression of separate but equal.

A single Muslim young adult female, who is a graduate of the University of Performing Arts, had something quite different to say:

> From reading this ayat (verse) I realized that men and women are not equal. Men and women are not the same. Allah has allocated certain roles and responsibilities that are equitable for each of them. These roles are befitting to their nature. This ayat relieves me from wearing one less mask, and that mask is taking on the role of the man!

Much of what the above respondents said, as well as those not quoted at this point, was similar to that of the modern exegete, Sayyid Qutb, who understood the verse as legislative of functional relationships between man and husband (protector and provider) and woman and wife (mother and child). He explains that the division of labor is equitable for both male and female. It makes males and females become more conscious of how, why, and what they were created to do.

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Now I will proceed to report the responses of the target readers regarding the most controversial concepts in each line of the verse.

Respondent Comments on Each Line of the Verse

Men are maintainers of women (regarding all men responsible for all women)...

I established, based on the following responses, that the thoughts, ideas and viewpoints of these women are consistent with those exegetes who explain that God is saying that men shall take full care of women. It is evident that these women understand this part of the verse.

The consensus of the target readers is that God is speaking to spouses, but He is also saying that all Muslim men are responsible for all women whether it be their mothers, sisters, wives, or single non-related Muslim females. Some of the target readers' responses in regard to this are as follows.

A Muslim woman who has studied Arabic and has been married for 37 years said:

> When it says maintainers, I think it is pertaining to the respect of all women. Not bringing down women and not being so far superior to make women feel inferior. Imams should make sure sisters (all females) are being taken care of. This verse doesn't mean that men have to marry them to take care of them.

Another Muslim woman, who was the first wife in a series of three polygynous relationships, agreed with the respondent above. She recounted an experience that supports her feelings.

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> ...although all men are *qawwāmūna* for all women, (it) doesn't mean that men have to marry other women to provide sadaqah (charity) or support for them.

She sadly revisited the following experience:

> My husband owns an apartment building where a divorced Muslim woman was far behind in her rent. He didn't want to evict her because he felt a sense of responsibility for her. So he married her! He didn't have to marry her especially since we were already under extreme financial pressure. Why couldn't he just let her live in the apartment until she got on her feet or until someone else married her?

Another respondent who is a young married woman in a monogamous marriage with three small children and a full time employee told me her understanding of Islam, and then recounted an experience that demonstrated other ways that men are *qawwāmūna* to non-related Muslim women.

> I love Allah, I love Islam, and I think Islam is a life-long learning and growing experience. It helps to make you fully human.

Then she said:

> I think because Muslim women cover, we are easily identified, so I think that men in general, if they see a sister in the public who needs assistance, they are required to help her. For example, my car broke down, and I was in hijab, and I was trying to figure out what to do. Al-hamdilillah, this Muslim brother and his wife stopped and helped me and drove me where I needed to go. Because in Islam, Muslims have a strong sense among each other as a family, even though you may not know this brother or this sister. I think we know in the back of our heads that if we help each other and it is pleasing to Allah, we are going to get blessings. In the workplace, there are two Muslim men that I know, and they look out for me. During Ramadan if it is time for iftar (break fast), they will buy the food, and we will all eat together. One Muslim manager allows the other Muslim male and female to use his office to make salat. Also during Ramadan, my break was at 4:00pm but iftar was not until 4:45. I asked my manager if I could take a later break, and he told me I could

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> only take a later break this one-day. I mentioned this to the other manager (a Muslim brother) and he went storming into my manager's office and then he came back and told me that my break was now at 4:45. I think this is an example of how Muslim men in general are responsible for Muslim women.

The next respondent is the principal of an Islamic school, a specialist in nutrition and urban planning. She spearheads pastoral care and grief counseling for Muslims. Married three times, she is currently in a polygynous marriage. She has four children and several grandchildren. She is a member of a large extended family composed of three generations of Muslims. This respondent gave her understanding of Islam and recounted a real life example of how men demonstrated the role of *qawwāmūna* of all women:

> It is a total way of life; it is not a religion. It is the way you do everything everyday, every moment. The guidance is very clear in the Qur'ān and hadīth . The Qur'ān gives us the word, and hadīth tells you how to carry things out. My concern is not so much with material things but if my right hand (good deeds) is going to outweigh my left hand, how will I stand on Judgment Day? And can I answer the questions in the grave? I am concerned with the times I did not make the salat on time, or the times that I didn't make the salat at all, or the times that my salat is not correct. I am concerned if I have enough blessings to erase those mistakes out. I am more concerned about where my everlasting life is going to be. My material provisions are already decreed here.
>
> Men should have full maintenance of women. And we as the Muslims don't seem to understand that! All men must have full care of women! This is why the role of the *wali* or the *wakil*, the guardian is so important. He's supposed to take care of single women until they get a husband. And if they do divorce, the husband is supposed to return them back or take them back to their fathers in the same position or better than he found them prior to marriage. My husband is a *qawwām*. My husband fully maintains and sustains me. My husband also takes care of quite a few Muslim women family members. For example, some mornings I must leave my house at 5:30 am to care for my mother. So for him to give up his time, he supports me and my mother and other females. This is his contribution to the well being of female relatives; because he could say I

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> need you to stay home, or I need you to do so-and-so, or I just won't let you go because you're my wife and that's not your responsibility.

In contrast to what was previously stated, this respondent (a single Muslim woman) has a different position:

> I see this verse applies to married men and women. However, I would like to see men in general accept the position which Allah has given them, and apply it to every woman as far as protecting and maintaining them.

Another single young Muslim female differed with the above respondent. She said:

> Yes, this part of the verse is for all Muslim men to take care of all Muslim women. As a single Muslim female, my dad is responsible not only for providing financial support, but to make sure I practice Islam properly, even though I do not live with him. And so, he is my spiritual provider, he gives me advice on how to live this way of life. He gives me praiseworthy knowledge about Allah, His final Prophet and about Islam in general.

These statements are significant because they are consistent with the *mufassirūn's* such as Ibn Abbās and Qurtubī who state that men in general are responsible and protectors of all women. Further the interviewees responses expressed the same sentiments as some contemporary Muslim women scholars. (Refer to Chapter Four for commentary on the responsibility of *qawamanūna.*)

In regards to the domestic part of this verse:

> Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, (wives)...

Based on the following responses I found that women completely accepted this part of the verse. They viewed the man's role as protector and maintainer as a relief.

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A mother of three children feels that maintenance is more than simply financial:

> It's more than that. It's much more comprehensive because on the maintenance part, it incorporated teaching. It incorporates all the material things we can see in this life. But, also, if a woman is not praying and her husband doesn't realize his wife isn't praying, then Allah's going to ask him did you know your wife did not pray? People need to recognize that when a husband goes out and he learns 200 ayahs and whatever other Qur'ān and his wife only knows five, then Allah is going to say, I blessed you with these things but what did you do for your family? Family structure is so important in Islam, because if the family unit is not surviving, then you can't create a good ummah, which is a good community. If we don't start correcting our family structure then our ummah is going to be lagging, and we'll have other dissensions in the community. Allah has been most kind and most merciful with blessing me with a husband who provides financially for me and spiritually for me.

This next respondent is a clinical specialist, with a Master's degree and 20 years work experience, who converted to Islam at the age of 45. She stated:

> I was under no pressure or stigma to do so by my husband or the community I had married into. As a Christian woman I was lawful to my husband and the Islamic community accepted me as one of their own. I felt an intrinsic need to commit to and house a deeper understanding of my husband's religion and my religion of choice. Concerning the issue of men being the maintainers of women, Allah is my source and my supply, and in His infinite wisdom, He provides for me an earthly protector in my husband! This protection is a blessing in a world ruled by immoral men. This is also a relief to women in that their everyday needs are to be provided for by their husbands. Now, to one outside the community, this could appear to give the upper hand to men, but kindness and charity are prerequisites to these responsibilities decreed upon the men. This is exactly why the decree of men being the maintainers and protectors of women and children are a huge responsibility! This is also a huge relief to women.

Another woman who is a pioneer and community activist uses Maududi's translation because it is an exegetical translation and it facilitates her understanding the verse. She uses the verse to defend herself and her polygynous situation. She would

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refer to this verse for an understanding of how to handle her marital affairs. She realized that there were several polygynous situations where the spouses did not put this verse in particular into correct practice.

> I would constantly refer to this verse in my situation. I think that men in general thought the part that stated that "men are maintainers of women" is a cliché. When women would come to them with that part of the verse, telling them that they would have to maintain, they would say, "oh not that again." I think the part that is most clear is about maintenance. I studied that part over and over and over again, because I was always struggling to be maintained. I know now that Allah is the provider, yet I was struggling to be maintained, my children and myself by my ex-husband. I thought we should at least have the basics, food, clothing and shelter. And that is something that we struggle to have on a consistent basis. More often than not, I was the one that had to make sure that the finances were there. Which sounds really crazy that a woman with nine children would have to worry about finances? But this was the situation, and I was not the only one going through this. Basically, I had a clear understanding about what Allah means by maintenance. It may have been from my family background, because I was always, or I was used to being taken care of totally by males – my grandfather, my father, and my uncles. I felt more secure in my Christian family situation. It was a given then, and I think that it definitely should be a given in Islam. When Allah says, men are maintainers of women, and Allah knows best, it's obvious, it's right there. But I was confronted with trying to figure this out when I became Muslim. I think my ex-husband understood this verse. He was doing a lot of studying, as he said, trying to establish the deen, and he did finally do this. I think the maintenance of his family was a sacrifice he had to make in order to do that. I really didn't agree with that, but I think that maintaining and protecting women is part of establishing the deen. I think you have to have a balance. But back then, during the early pioneer times, what the men had was zeal, a tremendous zeal. When I think about how young we were, it was amazing the zeal that we had, to establish the deen, especially the men, they were soldiers. They were heavily security conscious. In that aspect, they were protectors of women and children. But protection covers more than this. When you put Muslim women and children in the position where they have to go seek maintenance from those who were not Muslims, you have to do and say all kinds of things in order to obtain finances. In those situations you were not protected. There was no balance. This was the reason that the family was scarified somewhat, in order that Islam was established in the community.

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She continued:

> The fact remains that first the family must be intact and morally stable, viable, maintained and secured, before the community can develop. When I think, maintenance, I think comprehensively. Overall maintenance, is your physical, your emotional, your spiritual, your educational, your financial, it's all of those things – sustenance. Yet my ex-husband, he was excellent as a protector and a teacher. And he was very adamant about his feelings about the deen. He taught me everything he knew about the deen. Because he had other wives it was difficult. Especially as he didn't have a structured job. He was structured to go to the masjid for Fajr and for all the prayers. The majority of the time in my polygynous marriage, my family was on welfare. This is a total contradiction to what Allah says in the Qur'ān, verse 4:34, that men are maintainers that your husband is supposed to be the vicegerent over the family and over you. Yet he would allow me to put myself in that position, to go after welfare. I used to cry when I had to go through that. I would be garbed down and I was supposed to be the best of people, but I had to go through this. This was a total contradiction to what I was supposed to be about. It was like a cloud over me. I was depressed to the utmost. It was too many contradictions going on with this religion, marriage, and all of it.

The next respondent has a bachelor's degree and some credits towards her Master's degree. She is a retired teacher, married with three young adult children. She devoted much of her time to teaching her children at home (home schooling). She first talks about her understanding of Islam, and then she explains the man status as *qawwām*.

> My understanding of Islam is that Islam is about the submission to the will of Allah, and there is no other God but Allah and Islam is the only way of life for me because I see nothing better. Allah is most perfect and we, as Muslims should strive to adhere to his tenets. That is all it is about, *ibadah*, worshipping Him, knowing that we are vessels, slaves or servants of Him and that we are going to make mistakes, but there is nothing else but Allah. I am content with this belief, but I am not content with myself as an individual because I'm imperfect and need to strive and struggle constantly everyday.

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> My husband as *qawwām* provides shelter and protection and he is spiritually and emotionally supportive. He maintains more than financial support. Because if you have a spouse, Allah says this is a half of a whole so I join with someone and we marry, then he is supposed to bring to me some spiritual awareness and I shall bring to him some spiritual awareness and it should be the coming together of spirituality. Insha'Allah, this will raise us to a higher level of Islam.

The software engineer, who is also the granddaughter of the first African American Muslim man to make Hajj, gave a meaning of *qawwām* which incorporated all the preceding responses:

> In my utopian vision, I have always interpreted this verse to mean that men should care for women the way women care for their children; lovingly, willingly, completely and without malice. In reality, of course, people have taken it to mean that women should 'bow down' to men because men are supposed to be better. I want to ask them how many times they have seen a mother do that to her child. If they have seen it at all, then the woman must have been mentally ill. No sane, loving mother would ever make her child 'bow down' to her. We make them show respect, but we do it most of the time through kindness and love. If you ask most people, they treat their mothers with respect because they want to – not because they're afraid of their mothers. But, men sometimes mistake the incitement of fear/contempt for the teaching of respect. They are two different things. Then, there are brothers at the other end of the spectrum who are too soft. So, sisters have to choose between tyrants who will consume their lives and keep them in drama and confusion or a brother who is too kind and quiet, allowing the woman to lead when he should do it. Thankfully my husband is not a tyrant. He does the best he can. I know he gives his whole paycheck and helps me physically with things that a man should do; like taking care of the car, and treating me like a lady and not just a female. His understanding came really from his mother, who is also Muslim (Alhamdulillah). She is a strong woman, very focused and intelligent but also funny and quick-witted. He developed a respect for women from watching her all his life. So, he naturally applies that to his marriage.

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The following is how the married police officers see the man's status as *qawwām*:

> Husband: I look at myself as the leader of the household. I am not a dictator. I pretty much rely on my wife for a lot of things. There are some things that Allah, the most high, has made her more knowledgeable in and I rely on her for that and there are things that Allah has made me more knowledgeable in and we rely on each other. I think that is more than my responsibility to maintain the household financially, but also spiritually to make sure we are both on the right track, that we both remain in the deen and to gain more knowledge.
>
> Wife: We lean on each other. I am clear about my role. We are clear about where we are going. We see the same things. I agree with what he just said. We try to maintain balance and harmony in our marriage, so we usually end up doing what he wants (smile). But it is rare that we don't see things the same way.

A respondent, a young Muslim woman married to an incarcerated man for eight years before divorce, who is a high school graduate and is presently working as a medical assistant in a large local hospital. She reported on how she understands Islam and how she sees her husband as her maintainer:

> Islam is the only way of life. Through studying Islam and practicing it, it puts a balance in my life that I didn't have prior to Islam. Islam seems more natural to me because it is not pushed on me where in other religions if you sin or make mistakes you have to confess your sins to other humans. In Islam you take everything straight to God. There are no intercessors between you and God. If I do something wrong I don't have to go to another human being and tell them what I am doing wrong because Allah knows what we are doing and how we are doing. God is the one who gets me through things. Islam has made me more of a peaceful person more than anything else I have experienced. It is the best way of life for me.

She interpreted the verse as:

> God is saying He put men here on earth to guard over women, protect them and take care of them, and to protect them from the ills of society, to guide them spiritually and to help them grow in the deen, and to make it possible so that she can stay home from work and raise her children.

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Although she was not able to consummate her marriage and her ex-husband was not able to physically and financially to maintain her as Allah directs men to do in His book, she still insisted that her husband was her *qawwām* (maintainer). She adamantly said:

> My ex-spouse is handsome and very spiritual like Yusuf (Joseph) in the Qur'ān! We complemented each other. He made sure I learned about this deen. He helped me soften my heart in order to understand Allah better, and to understand Him in different ways. I don't think my heart prior to my marriage to him was as soft as it is now. He showed me how to use this deen in my life for all times, all occasions. He helped me so I would strive to be Muslim at all times, not just when I was with the Muslims and when I was with the non-Muslims I do what they do. Financially he was not the total maintainer. But he paid for my Islamic classes, he bought me books and tapes and gave me money to use for whatever I needed, and I thank Allah for him. I only divorced him because I was at a point of my life when I needed to move on, but I still love him for his deen, spirituality, and for the sake of Allah. He filled the void when I was younger. Now that I'm older, and I don't have any children, I need to move on. I need somebody who is right here with me physically. I need more in my marriage now. I need someone I can pray with. I think Allah knew what I needed in the beginning, and I didn't need the physical relations. I had enough of that in my life. I needed the spirituality first, and that marriage fulfilled my needs. Now I'm ready to move on to those intimate things that make a marriage. My ex-spouse understood the status of *qawwāmūna* clearly. He stated that if he added all that he owed me for overall maintenance, he would never be able to pay me. He tried to compensate for this by teaching me everything he knew, by being compassionate and always treating me with kindness whenever I saw him.

Another more mature Muslim woman, also married to an incarcerated man and now divorced, has something completely different to say. Her thoughts are in contrast to the respondent above:

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> After being married for one year, I couldn't deal with it. I never consummated my marriage. After learning the religion, I realized what his role and responsibilities were as *qawwām* and what my role was as a righteous wife and this was not the case in my marriage. Actually, I was the man of the house, I was the *qawwām* and he was supposed to be the *qawwām.*

This woman has two sons, has some college experience, and currently works as a phlebotomist. She is also a part-time drug and alcohol counselor. She is the child of alcoholic parents who reared her brother and sister. This would account for her feelings and statements regarding how strongly she feels about men living up to their responsibilities as maintainers of women.

The next respondent is an insurance agent, in a monogamous marriage to a Christian man. She accepted Islam, and he is still Christian. She has two children and three grandchildren. Her understanding of Islam is:

> There is no God other than Allah, and that we were all born Muslims and we all will die Muslims. Some of us will die practicing and others won't; but, I'm not contented with my practice of Islam because I stopped really studying, yet I do practice in a spiritual sense, but I remove myself from a lot of Islamic activities. I know that Islam is the only religion. I make salat, I do what I'm supposed to do, but that's all I do, so I'm not growing as a Muslim. Some of it is my work schedule. I know that is not an excuse.

With this in mind, she talked about her understanding of the verse:

> Even though my husband is Christian, my husband has always been the provider. Unfortunately as far as this verse is concerned, a lot of Islamic men, that I know, and I heard about, my husband fits the Islamic man's position (as *qawwām*) more than most of them. However, I did have a problem in the beginning because everyone said I would have to divorce my husband. I can't see why so many Muslim women are minding my business and telling me I have to divorce my husband and marry a Muslim man who is married to two women and not taking care of either

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> one of them. My husband is really a good provider. If I look at some of the Muslim men I know, and some of the Muslim marriages that I know, my husband follows this verse more so than they do. My husband has always been monetarily the one who takes care of the house. I was married to him 23 years before I became Muslim.

The following respondent is an accountant who has been married five times, some monogamous, and some polygynous. She is presently in a polygynous marriage now. She has four children and several grandchildren. Her husband is married to a Christian woman who she has never seen, and they have three small children.

She stated that this works for her. She spoke of being alone a great deal of her adult life; she enjoys the days when he's not there. It gives her a chance to wash her hair. She does all those things that she does not necessarily want him to see her do. She stated that she could move her bedroom around and redecorate the house if she pleases. And when he comes back, her feet are all done, and her hair is done. She stated that she enjoys the part where they don't interact at all. "It's like he's out of town and that works for me. You go through the little emotion things every now and then, but that's just being a woman." She believes Islam is:

> ...the great equalizer. If you practice the deen and the *Sunna*, it gives such a dignity to women who didn't have the advantage to learn it from their mothers. If you didn't go to finishing school or charm school, if you practice Islam it tells you how to walk, how to talk, how to dress, how to act. It gives dignity to everyone, so the daughter of a king, and the daughter of a street walker have the opportunity to have the same dignity, because Allah (saw) says the best of people are the ones best in their deen. So, regardless of anything, if I immersed myself in the deen, it gives me an opportunity for such dignity. Islam is orderly and dignified. I am impressed with its serenity.
>
> My first two marriages were not Islamic. I think that because my father was such a domineering maintainer, I have not been attracted to domineering men, and the three Islamic marriages were with men who,

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because I'd been a single parent for such a while and running the household on my own, didn't have a problem with me doing that. So, I didn't have to ask a question for every decision I made. With my present marriage, he maintains as far as providing money, but I'm the one who writes the checks and pays the bills. So, I've never experienced that (being dominated), and I think those men who were like that were not attracted to me, and I definitely was not attracted to them. I've always been in relationships where people saw me as a helpmate. And I think I avoided domineering situations because of the relationship between my mother and father. I used to look at my mother and think no one is ever going to talk to me like that, and no one is ever going to make me feel obligated for finances.

I don't know if we ever had a discussion on this particular verse, but we've had discussions in general on the roles of men and women. My husband is intelligent enough to tell me what he wants me to do in Islamic ways so there is no disagreement. For example, I was complaining about something and my husband told me not to be like Abraham's daughter-in-law. (Based on a *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* in Bukhari, Abraham's son Ishmael was married to a woman who complained and was not grateful for her provisions, so Abraham told his son to change his threshold.) And I was complaining, but what he said stopped me because what is the argument? I know the *ḥadīth* and I don't want to be like that. So, he never said, "I don't want to hear it" or "don't be complaining". He basically was saying that, but he said it in such a way that there could be no argument about it. Of all the attributes that he brings to me, those are the things that endear me to him because he brings me things, and he presents them in a way that are for my soul's sake.

The following response is from the spouse of one of my earlier respondents who is a dental assistant. He stated that he loves Allah and loves Islam. He continued:

I couldn't have been anything else and be at this spiritual plateau where I'm at now. Islam is just beautiful. I mean the whole way of life. Islam is accountability. Islam makes you accountable for what you do. When I first took *shahadah* I felt as though, this is a miracle.

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He says about his position as *qawwām*:

> As to my position as *qawwām*, Allah joined our hearts together. I've always been there for her. I always tried to do the best I can for her. I always tried to teach her things, always tried to show her I love her. We don't have those problems where one spouse oppresses the other. The things that we see other people go through, we never had that. We never had all that craziness; it's never been like that. Well, basically from the beginning, when we first even got married I always provided, she didn't have to work. I paid all the bills, paid the mortgage, bought her clothes and food. ...but she would cry and talk about I want to go to work. So, I said well, you need to go to school and do something and stop this crying, because I'm tired of hearing you cry! And she started to go to work.

Now I will proceed with the part of the verse that speaks about God's favor, or what is commonly known as 'the degree above'; ...because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. The respondents had the following comments.

The first woman who responded is the married, retired accountant with three children. Her understanding about the "degree above" is:

> I understand the verse as basically Allah has created man and woman as equal, but he's made man a degree above woman in being a provider and protector. His degree is strength because he (Allah) has made men stronger than women. However, he's made them both equal in his sight of humbleness and in his sight of whose deeds are going to be answered. That's why men have the higher burden on them because Allah asks them, "What did you do to your family? How did you provide for your family? What did you do to teach your family?" Those questions will be asked of the man, and they will be asked of the woman. What did she do and how did she guard herself? But that man still has the key responsibility of protecting his family. Sometimes, in this society, we take on a lot of characteristics of men when we are women because we think that's a form of independence, but Allah has already made the woman very independent in Islam because he's given her rights and he's given her a lot of things. As far as the maintainer and protector that's the man's responsibility. He (Allah) has given him (man) the degree above women; but, I don't see it, as he's bigger or stronger. No, this is his responsibility so he has that right.

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Her husband has an interesting explanation about the degree. It is quite different from his wife's perspective:

> In reference to the "degree" that men get more by way of inheritance and responsibility, although men get more responsibility and inheritance, women get more than men because they get more benefits. Allah gives women more. For example, you have a brother and a sister and the father dies, the son gets two shares, and the daughter gets one share. This is not fair because, the sister gets more and the brother gets less. Why, because as soon as, the brother gets his two shares, if he is an adult, he must use his two shares to take care of his mother, his grandmother, his sisters, etc. because he is responsible for women. Whereas as soon as the sister gets her share, she, can go to the jewelry store, she can do anything she wants with it, because it's her money and further, her brother has to take care of her, if she's not married. So his two shares in reality turn out to be less than her share. The man has to spend his entire share to take a care of the women. Yet the non-Muslims read the part on inheritance, and say, see how unfair this is to women. But they really don't understand how this injunction is applied in real life situations. [Then there was a discussion around the fact that unfortunately African American men are not in the practice of passing down anything in inheritance. They don't have this "degree" to begin with, and they have to spend out of their means.)

The dental assistant responds:

> I understand the man's provision in terms of him getting more inheritance than I do, because he's expected to spend more of his money. I think it's very fair, I think it's so fair for women. We get to keep our money and do whatever we want to do with it. We don't have to provide for anybody. You know, I think that's great! Although we get less, it's all ours, you know, we don't have to spend our money on maintaining the house or whatever.

Another respondent, a Muslim woman married to a Christian man, agrees with Yusuf Ali's translation of the meaning of the verse. She said:

> I interpret it as saying men are physically stronger than women so therefore they are protectors. A maintainer is someone who provides all your necessities, your mode of transportation, where you live, and how you live.

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The following woman has a very different position regarding "degree above".

> I can't really say that I have a clear understanding of this verse, and I'm not sure exactly what it means, but there are some things that I've observed that it seems that men do better than women. I will say it's not my understanding of Qur'ān that came into this equation but my observation of people that made me come to certain understandings. Women, when they get frustrated, will abandon salat completely, and I find that men, regardless of what sins they commit, don't abandon salat. I think, and I'm not basing this on Qur'ān, but on my personal opinion, that's one of the degrees that men have over us. And another thing that men do is make practical decisions, and sometimes women make emotional decisions that are not practical. We get upset and don't think about everything and we just think about our emotions at the time, and will make life-altering decisions based on how we feel at that moment. We may not feel that way 24 hours later, but we've already made that decision. Men, regardless of their emotions, will think about it, say I still have to do what I have to do. I think that is another degree that men have over women, and regardless of this society. I am one who works out of the home, I think that most of us are not geared to work out of the home, and to take care of our home without enormous stress. And I'm not saying that women should not have an education or a job, but most women find it very stressful and what usually happens is that we take away from our families. I think men have the ability to be out there and work better than women because Allah designed men that way to handle the stress. They may complain, but they still can deal with it. We get overwhelmed.

The single Muslim woman said her understanding is:

> Men are the protectors and maintainers of women as long as they do just that, protect and maintain them financially. Allah gave men this position of responsibility.

The dental assistant's husband spoke about degree:

> I take it as more physical strength, and I understand like the provision that Allah gives men, because he has to do more with his provision 'cause he's responsible for maintaining the women in his family, his wives, his daughters, his sisters, you know, his parents.

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A young mother gave her understanding regarding the degree above:

> I never understood what the degree above is because men are... superior to women. You know men can make salat everyday for the rest of their lives and maybe this gives them that degree. This is how I feel, I may be wrong. I think that this is a beautiful thing. I think men have a really big responsibility. I didn't realize that until I married. Men do have a lot of responsibilities, and this is what the verse is saying... this is how I perceive the verse, that's why I don't see the verse as oppressive to women. I think a lot people outside of Islam try to always perceive Islam as oppressive, especially in aspects dealing with women. I don't know any Muslim women regardless of how their marriage may be or the problem that may have, who were Muslims before their husband and will not be Muslim after their husband. They don't see Islam as this big oppressive cult. It is how those outside forces see Islam, especially with everything going on. I have never read anything that makes me regret being Muslim or makes me reconsider, that I did the wrong thing. Finally this reference to the "degree", I see that it means men have more responsibility than women.

In regard to the concept "degree above" this woman said:

> She sees it as the "bedroom verse". She sees that men have a degree or position over women because they take care of them in the manner that they are accustomed to being taken care of, i.e., materially also, and it is not just materially that men should maintain, but they must sustain you mentally, physically, and spiritually.

She continued:

> This relates to the husband getting more in inheritance, and women getting less. Husbands get more because they have to do more than women. They have to take care of women, their wives, their mothers, their sisters, and any female relatives. Women do not have to spend their money on maintenance, whether it is earned or inherited. They can spend their money as they please. When men excel over others, over women, it's only because he has more responsibility than the woman. He's responsible for women; women are not responsible for men. Therefore he excels not so much because he is physically stronger, and not because he has an extra rib, because we were taken from his rib, he excels because he has more responsibility.

In contrast to what all other respondents said about the "degree," the last respondent

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said this:

> ...the ambiguous part is where it says that He has made "one of you" to excel the other. It's funny how we always assume that refers to men.

In regard to the next line of the translated verse which reads: Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard,the respondents had the following comments.

The mother of three and a retired accountant told me about her responsibility as a good Muslim wife and the right her husband has over her.

> As far as my understanding Allah does say that the man should find comfort with his wife, and that's a halal (permissible) act. Sex is a permissible act in marriage, and that's why people get married, to have sex and to propagate Islam with children. As far as a right, that is his right and if the person (woman) is being maintained, then that's a right and responsibility.

The retired school teacher spoke of her role as *qānitāt*: She said:

> This part of the verse is relevant to my relationship with Allah because Allah is telling me to do these things, and I do these things first, and foremost, because Allah says so, because Allah is the master and designer of everything. So many times, I may not want to be obedient but Allah says be obedient. So I try to be that way because it may be my only possibility of getting into Paradise, insha-Allah, because I have been an obedient wife. It's not about my husband. It is about pleasing Allah (saw). Therefore, Allah again is telling me I have a responsibility to myself to obey Him first, and then deal with everything that comes after Him. Again, I have a responsibility to deal with Allah first, and because Allah has said that I should be obedient in order to please Him; then I try to be obedient to my husband for the pleasure of Allah.

She continued to discuss her role as *qānitāt*:

> As a Muslim woman, and a covered Muslim woman, I realize that I am always on display because people are always looking at me. I tried to tell my children to hide their faults (in public) and put their best foot forward. I try to hide my own faults and put my best foot forward as well. I try to always be cognizant of the fact that I am being watched, and sometimes I

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> forget that and Allah sends messengers to remind me of that. For example, people say to me, you know I saw you at so and so, and I say, my goodness, I didn't even know that this person knew me. So, yes, I try to be cognizant of that and constantly diligent, and I try to present my best self when I am in the public. In reference to guarding in my husband's absence and his secrets, I guard in my husband's absence and when I am outside of my house, I hide his faults. I keep his business his business.

Another respondent voiced:

> Well, I try, to be a grateful servant in terms of, my husband provides for me, and I'm a devoutly obedient. ...when you have to explain that, it's not that you have to do everything he says do. You know, not whether it's a right or wrong, that might be from his opinion – where he might think you may, you know, you should do. I think women have a voice and an opinion about what they will do, what they won't do, if it's nothing outrageous, it's okay, you know, you can easily be obedient, especially if he's guiding you under the instruction that Allah has guided him, not because he wants to be male dominant. When you submit to your husband willingly, it's like a win-win situation. You know it really is because, Allah has favored women in a lot of respects, and *alhamdullillah*, I don't have this westernized hang up about feeling inferior to men, or feeling oppressed by any means, because this has not been the case. I like the fact that somebody opens the door for me, or gives me provisions and somebody takes care of me.

The single Muslim woman, who in addition to her work at the university volunteers as a teacher at a local mosque, stated:

> A woman has the responsibility to be obedient and respectful to her husband. This means that a woman should not do anything out of Islam like dressing without modesty, adultery and things of that nature. Both men and women have a responsibility to have an understanding that a woman is not to be treated any old kind of way.

Another single female was born Muslim, but once her parents divorced, her mother no longer practiced Islam. At the age of 20, she decided to become Muslim. Here is her perception of Islam, in conjunction with her comments of the role of the *qānitāt.*

She proclaimed: Islam is the amour of my soul.

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Her poem eloquently illustrates that she feels that God is the essence of her being. It is entitled "Consciousness."

> I remember You in my dreams.
> The cold air of the dawn appears.
> To You I belong and to You I will return.
> I submit.
> The warmth of noon's sun penetrates.
> I place my trust in You. I seek Your forgiveness.
> Have mercy on me.
> The afternoon light kisses the sky.
> You are the Greatest. I am absolutely nothing without You.
> How Perfect and Glorified are You.
> The gentle winds of evening tiptoe.
> To You belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on Earth.
> I am conscious of Your awareness.
> I rinse clean so that I can come before you.
> The night walks heavy and announces its arrival.
> There is no Might, nor Power except with You.
> Praise to you.
> If it's Your will, may I never limit myself to Your remembrance.
> I surrender.

Then she commented:

> Since my mother was the primary provider in our home she influenced me to believe that men and women are equal, they have the same roles and responsibilities. But when I starting practicing Islam and read this verse with the support of *tafsīr* and my father's guidance about it, I realized that Allah is saying that men and women are not equal. Now I feel relief. When I tried to compete with men I always felt the pressure. When everything is equal it makes me have to stand toe to toe with a man and that's tough. As a *qānitāt*, Allah is allowing the woman to be who she is, delicate, sensitive, emotional and caring. Men have to take care of them. I am happy to be a Muslim woman. I don't want the man's responsibility. It's a burden.

A recently married convert to Islam said this about an obedient wife:

> Before entering into the fold of Islam I struggled with being "obedient" to my husband because I was always striving to get the same rights as men. This is how I was raised, and this is what our society tells women to do, "Stand up to men you are their equal". Now that I study Islam,

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> especially regarding this verse, being an obedient wife "frees me up from the fight", the struggle of competing with men. And my obedience to Allah is most important because it gives me hope. It helps me to know that without any doubt I can depend on Allah. I know that Allah is watching me. I feel so protected, because He is so merciful.

The medical assistant stated:

> Righteous women are supportive of men. Wives should guard in their husband's absence.

The polygynous respondent, in her fifth marriage said in regards to being a righteous or obedient woman:

> I know that if I'm a bad wife, it won't benefit me, and it won't help me to get to Paradise. So in my marriage I try to implement it based on this. I'm not doing this to please you. Sometimes I might want to please you, but in those times that I don't feel like I want to please you the things that gives me motivation to do anyway is Paradise. I can get Paradise. Because man can't please me enough to do all the things that Allah says I have to do. No man can. The best of men can't do that, Paradise is my motivation. So even though I'm not clear on this, if my husband is displeased with me, Allah is displeased with me. I'm a person who can hold their anger for a long time, but that frightens me now. What if Allah takes my soul in that state? ...so I do things, good deeds, the things that I don't want to do, the things that pain me to do. I do because I say; maybe this one deed will get me through the door. So in becoming obedient, and trying to please my husband, I'm not so much trying to please my husband, it's so my husband won't be displeased with me. In other words, I don't want him to be displeased with me. I don't want him to be dissatisfied with me, because it says if he is displeased with me, the angels and Allah are displeased with me until my husband is pleased. So I'm not trying to please him, but I don't want him displeased with me. The things that I do for him to keep him from being angry or frustrated or thinking that I'm a rebellious wife, I don't do those things for him, but I do it for my soul's sake.

The granddaughter of the first African American Muslim to make Hajj told me about her dilemma and her struggle to be a *qānitāt*. She stated:

> I am working on my patience; on the irony that I am a 'career woman' when all I ever wanted was to stay home and raise seven kids (yes, seven

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☺). I have to understand that when Allah says 'no' sometimes, I have to be grateful for what He has given me. I could be much worse off, with no children and without a husband who is loving and supportive, and a family that also loves me. I have been unemployed before and homeless, too. So, I know what Allah has given me. Still, that weak human side of me wants something else. That's the part I'm struggling with.

She also stated:

> In this role it makes me share a lot, but it also makes me resentful when my sharing is taken as a matter of course; because it's not my job and I want to make sure my husband knows it. I feel bad saying that because it sounds so awful. But, brothers get spoiled very easily. If you help them too much, they think it's your job. Women are not that way. Most good women will do something themselves before they ask for help. And if you try to help them, they'll get in your way trying to help YOU do it. We're just raised from birth to be helpful. I think men sometimes are spoiled from birth to think they're better than women, so it's only natural that their woman should do more for them.

She continued to explain how she embraces her gender roles and does not apologize for them:

> I don't really care what non-Muslims think about the role of women in Islam. Sometimes, I get sick of Muslims apologizing for our family structure. So many generations of black women have been sacrificed at the altar of the western family structure that we know in our bones that Islam is better for women. I think that's why we rush to it so much. We take a look at it and say, 'What! He has to marry me first?', 'What! He has to take care of the family and I don't have to work outside the home if I don't want to?' 'What! He has to take care of his children?' GIMME SOME O' THAT! We go for Islam completely and naturally, like a women falling into bed after a long day. We are just drawn to it like honeybees because it's what our people need to drastically reverse the three centuries of brainwashing and brutality that have made our men too soft, and made us too hard.

A mother with three children voiced the following sentiments:

> It's been five years now since I got married to my husband and prior to marriage, and my first year of marriage, I worked full time. After I had my children I stayed home and maintained my family, and I did a little bit of sewing from the home. I move freely around the city. I negotiate

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> different things as far as with my business. I do some sewing and I do some accounting, and consulting. My husband works full time and maintains his responsibility as a provider, financially and spiritually, and he's not oppressing me in any manner to stay in the house. I tend to stay in the house, and when I'm out, I'm handling some type of business and I let him know where I'm going. That's important, and my husband lets me know where he's going, because at no point and time do we know when Allah's going to take our soul. There's no secrecy of my whereabouts; and I don't see that as a form of oppressing me to have to tell my husband where I'm going. That's just a line of communication. With everything going on in this society, we need to address these things and basically keep addressing them on and on because we don't know. You can go to work today or tomorrow and your building could be blown up, and if no one knows where you are then your family is in disarray. And it's vice-versa because he's responsible for me, but he still has a responsibility to me to let me know where he is because I need to know if something happens to him. I need to be able to do the things I need to do to make sure he's prepared, and if something happens to me he needs to be able to do what he needs to do.

One of the early pioneers who had a difficult marriage spoke of her understanding of Islam, versus the expected gender role for a righteous Muslim woman.

> My testification that there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the last and seal of the Messengers that God sent to humanity. And based upon that testification, and my study of Islam, the components, the tenets, the articles of faith and the five pillars, drives me as a Muslim. I am driven by the foundation of Islam and I try to adhere to them. And my belief is based upon that. And the fact that my study has opened up my eyes to the fact that I was a convert, but realized I reverted to Islam. And this is what drives me.

She continued to say:

> The role of women was basically to hear and obey. If you had a problem, or disagreed, you weren't able to express it. If you did you were not obedient, and if you are not obedient to your husband, based on *sahīḥ ḥadīth*, 'that women who were disobedient to their husbands, would be cursed by angels' if your husband is displeased with you. That hadīth kept me in place. I didn't want to displease Allah. But the part of "hear and obeying" I tried to be obedient I didn't want to be disobedient, because I didn't want to be one of the inhabitants of the hellfire. Basically this is why I stayed around so long, because of my fear, I didn't

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> want to be a bad Muslim. All the women from this early community had this mentality and basic understanding of this. And this is what we did, so we hung around – we stayed in our marriages. We raised our children, home schooled our children, and we carried on and covered up our husbands' faults for the children's sake. And our children didn't know that there was a problem. They still look back on their childhood with the "fineness." When I look back I say, oh my goodness! What was I doing back then? The women who were not in polygyny looked down on us. They said they would never put up with it. They said to us "Why are you doing this, you don't have to put up with that, don't you know your rights?" This is the first time that someone expressed to me that I didn't have to deal with this. It hit me like a ton of bricks. I cried all the way home. I was devastated from that point on. It was a recurring theme in my head that I didn't have to deal with it the way it was being practiced. This was not like the *Sunnah* or practice of Prophet Muhammad. And when I would say to my husband that you're not being like the Prophet, then I became a rebel. I continued to study. I was constantly learning. I began to use the Qur'ān as an argument for me, rather than against me. I began to use the Qur'ān and sources like *tafsīr* and *fiqh* to help me.

The last respondent that spoke about this part of the verse is the Muslim woman married to a Christian husband. She spoke of the marital relations, and demonstrates how she negotiates her role and rights as a Muslim woman:

> We have a lot of the same views. I guess because I don't say to him that's not an Islamic thing to do, and he does not say to me that that's not a Christian thing. Religion does not become a big thing at my house. I do not look at it (Islam) as religion because I believe we were all born Muslim. It is a way of life that I am still very young in. We have some of the same values. We don't make salat together but he won't allow my salat to be interrupted.

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And the verse contines with the following translated words: As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct (*nushūz)*

In reference to how the targeted readers understood *nushūz*, these readers expressed divergent opinions.

The first respondent who is in a monogamous marriage said *nushūz* is:

> The ultimate disobedience is not submitting yourself and your soul to Allah (swt). We can talk about all the other things that constitute disobedience. Yes, adultery is disobedience, but these sins are sins that are committed, and they're committed in every community; however, these sins are forgivable by Allah (swt). So, we have to have the mercy in our hearts to understand that if Allah is merciful in forgiving us as humans, then who are we to be judges and jury? There is a punishment for every crime we commit and Allah has sent that down in the shari'ah to us. But, the ultimate disobedience to me, that's in my heart, is someone who doesn't submit and believe in Allah (swt).

The next respondent, who is also in a monogamous marriage, gave a different explanation:

> In a marital setting, the woman is taking care of the household and the children so that gives her almost equal responsibility to what his is. An example would be, if the husband is off to work and the wife is home with the kids. She has an opportunity, just like he would, to be with the opposite gender. But she is to uphold his trust and maintaining that trust, the husband knows that in going to work there will be no one else entering his household and no on else would be taking over his family in that regard. The disobedience would be if she didn't maintain that trust.

The Muslim woman married to the Christian man said this about *nushūz*:

> From a spiritual point of view, a disobedient woman is a woman who has a husband that goes out to work and maintains the household and she does nothing. He comes home and cooks and cleans. Even if she has a job she should instinctively want to make sure the house is maintained.

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The next woman disagreed with the respondent above. She referred to this as the "bedroom verse".

> The verse is clear to me. I understand *nushūz* to relate to the bedroom. If your husband approaches you and you refuse – then you have disobeyed him. This is *nushūz* because this is where the disobedience takes place. It's not from your husband telling you [that you] are disobedient because dinner's not ready, or you go to visit your family, and he's angry with you because he told you [you] couldn't go out. These things do not constitute disobedience. Disobedience is when you refuse your husband because you don't like him, you have no regard for him, and you discuss the secrets of your husband. We are told never to discuss those bedroom secrets.

The phlebotomist, ex-wife of the other incarcerated man stated:

> The verse is not clear on what constitutes disobedience. I think it means if the wife does not do what the husband says, or does not live up to the deen, then the husband can admonish her. But the verse is still oppressive.

One young Muslim mother defined *nushūz* as:

> Anything that Allah says is haram. For example, making salat, if you have a husband who is living up to his Islamic duties, who is maintaining the household, trying to educate the family in the way of Islam, and you have a wife who does not want to make salat or who is committing shirk (setting partners with Allah), or who is doing things that are not acceptable; who is allowing children to eat food that is not halal, or participating in activities that are not in the bounds of Islam. I think that anything in Qur'ān and *Sunnah* that Allah says that is not lawful, like not covering, not guarding your modesty.

The following respondent is one who, as mentioned before, had an abusive marriage, therefore, she took intensive courses of study around this subject and she came to the conclusion:

> Through all of this, my understanding about *nushūz* came about. It is guarding in her husband's absence what he would have her guard. I disagreed with my husband's perspective, and his interpretation of that

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> English translation of the meaning of Qur'ān 4:34. It just didn't come together with what Allah was really saying, and what the Prophet Muhammad said. I think that sometimes Muslims read the Qur'ān and they get the interpretation, but how they practice is another story. And then they start to practice things their way, and then make it the way for them. (They make the verse fit into their way.) And when you point it out that this may not be the way, and bring the *daleel* or evidence, and when you do this, it is perceived as disobedience. Even if it is clear as a sunny day, to go out and get the proper explanation from a qualified teacher and then present the evidence, it's considered as disobedience. This is big time disobedience.

The dental assistant and her husband both stated that they use *tafsīr* to understand this verse.

The husband defined *nushūz* as follows:

> ...disobedience, it could be lewdness, disobeying the things that Allah commands you to do. For example, when you tell your wife to do certain things and she doesn't do it, like, obeying Allah, and obeying his Messenger. ...In terms of that, it's all the things that Allah would frown upon.

The dental assistant said this about *nushūz*:

> I guess when your husband calls you to bed. You know, since there is a verse that supports that you approach your "tilth" anytime (Qur'ān 2:223) and if you refuse your husband, you know, the angels would be displeased with you until your husband is pleased with you again. But if you don't feel good, or there is some kind of circumstance or whatever, men should have a compassionate side to them too. And they should be understanding that it's not a habit of turning away. ...then there's other things you can do in kindness, there shouldn't be so much emphasis put on that. I don't think there's too many things that you can disobey you husband on in terms of *nushūz*, those are the two main points, guarding his house and provisions he's giving you, guarding your modesty, you know, which you would do anyway.

And she continued:

> I don't think it's an act of *nushūz* if you don't prepare the dinner on time, or you are late coming in, or you were unable to communicate with your husband. I think, that's just circumstances, things that are just the turn of

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> events that happen in the course of a day that you have limited control over. So dinner is not prepared, and there is a logical reason why it's not, is not *nushūz*. Then you should employ patience. Everyone should be patient. If the wife is working outside of the home, or she is taking care of some other matters, and dinner is late, you know, be patient.

And her husband then said:

> I would prepare it myself; I might even prepare it for her or buy her dinner. That's never been an issue, whether it was in the deen or not.

A male student of Islam and Arabic, had these comments about the verse and *nushūz:*

> ...understanding of *nushūz*, marital discord "that which leads to disobedience." It's indiscretion, going outside, having association with people who your husband may not think is appropriate. Like old high school friends who are not Muslim, who hang out at bars. Yet my wife would not ask me to do this.
>
> Disobedience to Allah – can be *nushūz*. I don't want to say disobedience to me – her not listening to me may not constitute *nushūz*. I have to admit that I'm lazy, so for example, if I ask my wife to iron my shirt and she said no, I can't do that, because I got so many other things that I need to do so I won't do it.
>
> This is not disobedience to me. Disobedience would be if she burned my clothes or something like that. [we chuckle] No I am just joking! Actually, she would be well within her right (smile)
>
> I think, umm, something major, if she stopped praying, for no valid reason or if she would refuse me in the bed. If she had a headache and would take her temperature to see how sick she is (smile). No, in all seriousness, I will paraphrase the hadith , that the angels curse the woman who refuses her husband's bed, because my wife is so God-fearing she won't do that. There is this strict male side of me that says, this is my right I want my right, but the reality is, that I am not married to a robot. She has feelings; I realize that about 2 weeks after the fact, but that night I wanted my right.

...admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them

(lightly); (Steps for correction)

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The young mother with three children is the first respondent who asserted:

> I don't think it is oppressive... I guess because that is not the type of marriage I was in, it got difficult sometimes, but I was never in a marriage that those steps in that verse was made reference to me at all.

She continued to discuss the steps of correction:

> ...people may read the ayat and they may distort it, especially the part of the disobedient women and the several steps to correct her disobedience. I think it is said in the verse you (the man) should verbally admonish her (the woman), and if the husband is to do that the wife should take that (admonishment) very seriously and to refuse to sleep with her. And if the husband refuses to sleep with his wife, she should take that very seriously to prevent it from escalating to another level.

(Her thoughts are similar to Ibn 'Abbās's commentary who states that some women do not take their husband rights seriously or they have total disregard for him...these are some of the signs of *nushūz*)

She continued to express her sentiments about this serious matter:

> ...I think the condition and state of society as it is now is very dangerous, and to go the next level of physically trying to punish or admonish your wife it would be a problem; but I know it happens, and I have read translations where it says beat lightly. There is a hadith or a particular school of thought, which does not support that particular behavior of beating. I would hope as a Muslim, since our main goal is to please Allah, and then to please my husband, that abiding by what Allah says and doing certain things would present the ultimate chaos *(fitna)*. We should always try to prevent the ultimate *fitna* in everything we do, not just in our marriages.

The next respondent, married for 37 years with seven practicing children stated:

> My husband would not think of "beating me" if I did not prepare dinner or if I was not home at a certain time. The few times that I was delayed from doing these things, I would let him know that. I always took into consideration to call or I would let him know that I would be late, and he was very understanding. He would wait to do whatever he had to do, because he knew he was going to eat. I never had that with my husband.

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> I have been married for 37 years. We had our ups and downs but never that. In regard to cleaning, if I didn't clean, sometimes when he came from work he would clean. If he sees that the house is untidy he realizes that I didn't have time to do it especially since he knows that I am dealing with the children. Overall, he understands the verse, and he is trying to live a life which is pleasing to Allah.

She also emphasized:

> When men and women get married, it is not that he marries her and then she becomes like a child afterwards. In that type of situation (previously described) he is treating her like a child. I didn't get that understanding (from the verse). We are both adults and as adults we both know our responsibilities.

The male member of the law enforcement couple said:

> My cousin and I discussed this verse a few times, and he made it clear to me that the Prophet's *Sunnah* restricts this verse. And the Prophet explained that word "beat" is not to physically harm or cause pain. The Prophet's example is to beat usually with a tooth stick. It means to show displeasure. It is not to physically harm or cause pain.

A woman in a monogamous marriage gave her understanding about the steps to correct nushūz:

> As far as admonishment, there's always steps and there's always arbitration prior to getting to the step of hitting someone. Even when they talked about the Prophet (saw) during his time when people did possibly beat their wives, they beat them with a miswak, which is a very small stick which was so minute it was more out of humiliation than out of abuse. I'm not a scholar in Arabic, but to say that the translation 'to beat them', is correct, puzzles me. You don't even have to be Muslim to recognize that if you've transgressed to a point of you wanting to beat someone then you need to remove yourself from the situation.

The medical assistant, ex-wife of the incarcerated Muslim man said:

> I agree with the first two steps of admonishment, but in regard to the last step, you should only use it if absolutely necessary, and should only hit lightly. This verse is not oppressive, but for the men who beat their

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> wives. They use this verse only as an excuse to justify their wrongdoings, because they really know that this verse does not give them reason to beat and harm their wives.

One of the husbands who participated in this interview stated that he agrees with the steps, but he would never beat her:

> If I had to beat her, I would have to leave her because I don't need to do that. I don't beat on women, that's not my thing.

The following respondent who had two difficult polygynous marriages explained the steps:

> I understand it as Allah giving knowledge to us about why and how he created us differently. I understand the way of settling conflicts is laid out for us in this verse. I think that they are laid out in a specific order; first, second and third, and I can go along with the commentary as well; but the word "beat" them lightly, I question this particular piece of the *ayat* (verse), and it was told to me that *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* backed it up or the *tafsīr* book backed it up by explaining that "beat them" means with no more than a *miswak*. And, it is more symbolic in terms than physical. Re-reading this verse now after we have had this conversation, I am paying more attention to Yusuf Ali's interpretation and what he says the four imams agree with that, because this is a formula and a way to mend and bind. Allah would not tell people to be cruel to each other or to beat somebody. What Allah is instructing us to do and what the four imams feel is the third step is to get an arbitrator from his family and from her family, and resolve the marital discord (referring to Qur'ān 4:35).

The respondent above purposely excluded the third step (to beat them) as a corrective measure because she has not read anything to substantiate what the word "beat" really means. Another respondent who also had a difficult polygynous marriage recounted why and how the steps were applied in her marriage:

> Disobedience is the displeasure of your husband. If you didn't agree with him, for example, I didn't agree with polygyny – this was, as far as he was concerned, disobedience. Even if I pretended that I agreed with it, he would say, "Well do that, I know you don't agree with it, but just hear and obey." You know, that type of mentality. He was strictly by the book for the most part. But, I still have this contention that he was neglectful

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> of his family. He agrees with this by the way (now). But he would follow these steps if he thought I was disobedient. Then he would "separate from the bed."

She is the first respondent to say she actually was hit:

> I got hit a couple of times. It was provoked. I always felt like I was used and abused. I always felt like my only recourse was to talk back to him. I was always reminded that the hellfire was filled with women, and it was mainly because of their tongue. And I was always reminded that my tongue would get me in trouble. I would say things to provoke him.

She further stated:

> I felt trapped. I would talk and talk and talk. I must say, he had a lot of patience with me, because if I would comment to him, and say something smart to him, I would keep saying it over and over again, until he hit me. There was no room for negotiation as far as interpretation of that verse of Qur'ān and what our roles are.

The male student of Arabic said:

> My understanding is that the opponents of Islam use this verse as I've seen on e-mail – those who oppose Islam say oh, you can beat your wife because it says so right here in verse 4:34. But in my years of being Muslim this verse has been explained by the *tafsīr* and the Prophet's example. This verse based on *tafsīr* and Prophet's example – beat them lightly with a feather – beat them lightly is symbolic – some form of humiliation.
>
> If you hit them with a feather – then you can't hurt that person. This is a form of humiliation. Beat them does not mean you can do any physical damage. Black their eyes or knock out teeth, and you cannot bruise them.

The female student of Arabic concurred with these remarks:

> But Allah says that oppression is worse than slaughter. Even though Allah says obey your husband, you don't do things that are considered haram or prohibited. Oppression is haram.

And yet another woman respondent gave similar comments. Her thoughts are consistent with commentary found in some of the exegetical translations.

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> If your husband is doing things which are considered haram, then he is not being obedient to Allah, therefore as his wife, you cannot follow or obey your husband in those things that he tells you to do that are haram or prohibited. You cannot obey your husband in everything I take issue with this. No, No, No, I take issue with this.

Another respondent has something very different to say about "beating" or women in oppressive situations:

> ... is that people in oppressive situations are so because they, for whatever reason, don't want to take responsibility for themselves. If you remain oppressed month, after month and year after year, that's because you didn't do anything to take you out of that situation. Islam didn't put you in this situation. It's something inside of you, where you didn't have the faith in Allah (saw).

This respondent talked about why she thinks men beat:

> There are women who are oppressed by men but it is not Allah telling the man to oppress women, it is the male ego. It is his ego saying that she (woman) is beneath me, then the man is not really her protector, but he becomes her keeper or jailer. He goes to the extreme because he doesn't know his place. But when you know your place, male or female, then it comes together.

Another respondent had a similar response:

> This is just what I've learned over the years as an African American woman and seeing my African American sisters strive. They do strive to educate themselves, and they are accustomed to taking care of families and being the sole provider in the family, and the head of the household and they handle this struggle. But women would like to have strong men in their corner, and men are attracted to women who have a certain kind of dominance. But when it comes to their ego, the ego can't take it. Then the men lean towards things about obedience, or they can strike women. And their own made-up interpretation is that, 'Well, you're working so hard, you're bringing home the bacon, let's get it on time.' And if it's not on time, whup upside the head! He thinks he has a right to hit her. Especially if she comes in and rolls her eyes and sucks her teeth, you know, 'a disobedient woman.' So it's the ego that doesn't allow them to embrace this verse wholeheartedly. It

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> may be a matter of convenience how they approach it. That's a shame, because it's very clear to me, this verse. And because of this verse I have been elevated. My status as a Muslim woman is elevated and I don't have a problem with this. I've always been treated fairly and kindly and my husband is fearful of Allah. So he does what he has to do to please Allah, and I benefit, *Alhamdullillah.*

Another male respondent gave his reasons why men beat their wives:

> I think you can do these things when you look at the verse in a vacuum; and looking at the verse in English, that is not what Islam is supposed to be. I can't justify why this takes place, but I know as human beings part of our struggle (*jihad*) is to conform our lives in accordance to what Allah says and many times we say this is my practice so let me find a *ayat* (verse) to justify that. We come from a background where many of us did that, and that is baggage that we bring with us when we came to the fold of Islam. You can't just read English and say this is what the verse means, and let me take it and run with it.

The discussion ended with why do men misunderstand this verse, and why do they utilize it to enforce beating as a corrective measure. The man continued,

> And one of the things that I try to live with is that in order to be the best, the Prophet said in an authentic *ḥadīth* (in Riyad al-Sālihīn), the best of you is the one who is kindest to his wife. Well I say then gee, I want to be the best, everyone should want to be the best, but to be kindest to your wife is really tough. And yet we know to be kind to the wife is part of Islam. It is positive, and that is really tough. So, if I broke her jaw tonight, I think Allah is not going to be pleased with me. So the brothers who do this, I think they cannot justify it, unless you are really crazy or out of your mind, you think that you have some reason to do that. But it is done; I think the West, the Western influence has influenced the whole world. And it is easy for us to point our fingers at the West, but we can't continue to do that ... The correct practice of Islam is the way to get rid of our baggage.
>
> I said all that to say, either a brother is crazy or he has some serious baggage that he brings. For African American men coming out of slavery, their manhood was stripped...many still have the psychological scars of slavery coming from a society where the institution of racism and discrimination still exists today.... they have serious baggage. They never could really exercise any authority. And now they come to the fold of

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> Islam and hear it in the English translations that say He sanctions men to have certain authority, and I think now they know they are in charge they are now in an environment that God says that men have control and authority over women. When they exercised this without taqwa or God consciousness, it is out of control and abuse ultimately falls on the wife... In understanding the practical application of this verse is to understand how the Prophet treated his wives and to follow suit. The proper practice of Islam is the way to get rid of our baggage... And this is how we make this verse meaningful in 21st century America.

His wife made additional comments regarding the matter:

> We go through different trials and tribulations, but I am not oppressed. My husband does not beat me. My husband doesn't admonish me by hollering. Those things are just not of the character of either one of us, and I think it's because we both have pretty much the same demeanor. Our relationship basically is each soul trying to help the other one get closer to Allah (swt) and get into *Jennah* (Paradise).

And the final line in the translated verse read: But if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance): for God is Most High, Great (above you all). In regard to the last line of Qur'ān 4:34, the majority of the women said it was self-explanatory, but it was only relevant to women who actually displayed signs, or committed *nushūz*. They said it is a mercy from God for these women in that God is putting more restrictions and limit on men not to continue applying "the steps" after the marital discord is reconciled. God is telling the husbands: do not remind them (wives) of past behavior; forgive and forget and move on with them with love and kindness.

There were additional comments. For instance, for those women who have mutual love, respect, kindness, peace, joy and an overall feeling of harmony in their marriages, they said that the exegesis of the overall verse positively influenced their gender position as African American Muslim women. They said this is primarily

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because their husbands understood the verse and applied it correctly in their everyday lives. One woman said, and I quote:

> Because we try to remember Allah first, but we always make mistakes. So, whenever we are angry or a crisis comes up, we realize that this is a test. Then we realize that Allah wants us to deal with it as best as we can. So when a crisis comes up we realize and know that it is a test from Allah, and we try to deal with it the best as we can. By making dua's or supplication, by communicating to each other, reading surahs, whatever it takes. And we talk to one another. We ask Allah for guidance.

Another wife said:

> If there's a disagreement as far as what the meaning of a verse in the Qur'ān, we search further for the meaning. My husband reads Arabic, and understands the Qur'ān. So I tend to ask him or I'll call someone with more knowledge.

A mature Muslim woman said:

> Harmony is maintained in my home very quietly, and only through the grace and mercy of Allah. We still make each other smile and blush and giggle. To me this is a win, anytime you can make your husband still blush, this is a win.

Another woman said:

> Allah is not an oppressive God. "Allah says He does not oppress Himself nor does He oppress His creation." When I read the Qur'ān, I know it is all positive. I read it positively yet there are those who read it negatively. I don't read the Qur'ān looking for the negative. I know it is all positive.

This is quite significant because in the Qur'ān itself in 18:49 it says:

> Allah does not oppress anyone...[32]

The *ḥadīth qudsi* (sacred *ḥadīth* – it is what has been revealed to the Prophet by Allah) also support her sentiments:

> On the authority of Abū Dharr al-Ghifāri from the Prophet is that among the sayings he relates from his *Rabb* is that He said: O my slaves, I have

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> forbidden oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another... [33]

In another *ḥadīth*:

> ... on the authority of Abū Hurayrah who said: The Messenger of Allah said: Allah the Exalted is good and accepts only that which is good...[34]

Another woman said:

> I had to say Allāhu-Akbar, God is great and I am fortunate when I read the Qur'ān, it is not oppressive to me. I don't have any feelings that women are inferior and men are superior by reading this verse. Nor have I read any other books that have portrayed that this verse is oppressive. I study Arabic, so maybe this helps me to understand what Allah is really saying, and it's not oppressive.

And she added:

> Women in America are pleased to be in full *hijab* (Islamic modest dress) and some in *niqab* (face covering). These women don't see their *hijab* as oppressive. I have been blessed by Allah, and make du'ā everyday for me not feeling oppressed by Islam.

Another respondent said:

> When we look at things through Western eyes we always try to apologize for this verse. We try to explain this verse away in terms of the Western way of looking at things. But the verse is in conformity with the man's nature and the woman's nature. Islam allows the woman to maintain her dignity and her honor. At the same time Islam has limitations for men.

Now in reference to the women who had difficult marriages because they were treated unfairly, neglected, abused, debased, and humiliated, they had very different opinions. They stated, that this part of the verse, was irrelevant and didn't have any meaning to them, primarily because, the other parts of the verse were so oppressive on them as women. Furthermore, they asserted that the overall verse negatively impacted on their

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gender position as believing women, because their husbands misunderstood and misapplied this verse in their marriages. One divorced Muslim woman articulated:

> I think that a Muslim woman should be loved more than anybody else, or any other woman, based on the fact that she believes in Allah, His Angels, His Prophets, His Books, His premeasurement, decree, and the Day of Judgement. Muslim women pray, fast during Ramadan, give charity, and if possible, make their Hajj (pilgrimage.) Also, she endures hardships and makes sacrifices (without complaining) to raise believing children and to respect her husband's status as *qawwām.*

And this woman tearfully continued:

> Loving a Muslim woman comes from somewhere else. I just wanted to experience someone who appreciates that. And if I couldn't get this, then I might as well do it alone. Because even in that marriage, I was alone, I felt alone. Therefore, I always wanted to divorce; yet I stayed married for many, many years. Eventually, I divorced because I was completely tired and depleted of energy. I wanted to be loved. With that comes the feeling of mutuality. Polygyny drains you. It gives you a feeling that you are one of many. That you are disposable. I was completely exhausted. I think that I really wanted to experience deep love. I did not want to be in a relationship where I was not experiencing love, protection, and maintenance. The verse wasn't applied positively to maintain my marriage. I wanted the divorce to be amicable. I didn't want it to be mean spirited. I just wanted him to understand that I just couldn't do this anymore.

With the sentiments in perspective, all the women, regardless of how painful it was for them to recount some of their experiences regarding the English translation of the meaning of Qur'ān 4:34, were willing and pleased to participate in this study. I will mention some of their final comments, and then end this chapter with my concluding remarks.

One woman expounded:

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> I think this discussion is a very positive thing, because many women have diverse opinions about many things in regard to this verse. So, this discussion will hopefully positively change how others see Muslim women, and bring about a more spiritual understanding among Muslims themselves. Hopefully this study will help people, men and women, to get on a higher level of their *deen*, and *Insha'Allah* strive to maintain marriages that please Allah the Most High.

Another woman added to her statements by enumerating:

> It's important that you keep on keepin' on and continue with your studies and with your writings. Because we know what is left after we die is our writings. So it's important that you put this in your writing so that the younger sisters do not get confused about what constitutes obedience, and what constitutes disobedience. Not just the younger sisters, but the older sisters, not just women, but men, and the whole world in general. When you hear people saying that Islam is the most misunderstood religion, it's the Muslim woman they're really talking about. For the Muslim woman is the most misunderstood person in the world. I marvel at you for keepin' on and going at this and wish you well.

And the final comment from a respondent regarding the overall interview was:

> As far as this interview, I am very thankful to Allah, the Most High, that He is allowing me to speak in reference to His *ayat* (verse) and also thankful that you asked me to do it. I am honored. I ask Allah if there's anything that I said in error that is out of character or wrong, it is from *shaytan* (Satan), and if it is anything that was good, it is only from Allah, the Most High. When we look at different verses, we are looking at it from an English translation, but Allah would not send anything down to human beings except something that was perfect, so we must be mindful of that. And, also to the readers, I ask to you to accept Islam, learn about it, and try to gain more knowledge so that you can meet your Maker in the best state.

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Final Comments

Based on the interview results, this chapter has presented clear evidence that African American Muslim women would make sense of the English translations of Qur'ān 4:34 in spite of the fact that they found the translations to be quite problematic. Furthermore, many of them expressed that the English is ambiguous as it stands, while others echoed that certain parts of the verse are restrictive and oppressive to women in general.

Based on the interviews conducted in this research, the women responded that just reading the English translation and applying it in real life situations has caused tension and conflict regarding issues of gender, marriage, sexuality, and the interaction between men and women. As documented in the responses above, a few of these women suffered abuse at the hands of their husbands because of the misinterpretation and misapplication of the English translations. Although these women struggled to endure the hardships that were unfairly imposed upon them as believing women, they didn't despair, nor did they blame God for revealing this verse. As one respondent said:

> For the men who beat their wives they use this verse only as an excuse to justify their own wrongdoings, because they really know that this verse does not give them reason to beat and harm their wives.

Based on her comment, I believe that she is implying that there is a strong possibility that these men would beat whether they read the verse or not. Another respondent recounted her difficult and painful marriages, and explained to us how she was able to push forward through it all:

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> I think it's a combination of many things. First and foremost, it truly has been Allah's mercy. His divine intervention, which I have seen in my life so clearly, and so many times that I would be scared to do anything else. Secondly, Allah has allowed me to have good people. The last husband of 13 years, the one thing he was for me was a very empowering person. He empowered me very much over the 13 years, and would try to point out and show me my goodness and my blessings. He always talked about what a wonderful mother I am. He always pointed out good stuff to me and that helped. Also, my sisters, the people from the day I took my shahadah that Allah put me around, even when I was in different places, there were people that had true love for me, gave me right guidance, and helped me through the tough times and stayed there. I also want to say that I know Islam is the way for me, and I couldn't change that.

Another respondent shared how she handled difficulties in her marriage. She voiced:

> I depend on Allah for justice, because I finally realized I could never get justice from my husband.

Yet, all of the women in this interview, whether they had difficult marriages or harmonious ones, acknowledge and accept the Islamic ideals of this verse. They submit to the fact that it is God himself who has justly defined the division of labor, specifically husband and wife, and men and women in general and given guidance for correct conduct for both males and females. Therefore, the overwhelming claim of all the respondents is the desire to adhere to God's injunctions in a way that does not oppress them, but empowers. Most of the women affirmed that in order to make sense of this verse, they had to search for the most appropriate explanation. Many of them did not solely depend on their husband for the proper meaning, but read *tafsīr* on their own and sought the proper interpretation and exegesis of this verse from qualified Muslim teachers and other sources. Throughout these interviews these women adamantly

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expressed repeatedly that it was their Islamic obligation to make sense of this verse so that the application of this verse will, first and foremost, be pleasing to their Lord.

Once the participants fully understood the verse, based on their readings of *tafsīr* and the example of how the Prophet implemented this verse, they were able to make sense of it, and viewed it as relief rather than hardship. Their understanding of the verse was consistent with the *mufassirūn's* explanation of it, and with the most appropriate translation of this verse found in Chapter Four.

They were not intimidated by their husband's status as *qawwām*, nor did they feel inferior. The women did not have a problem being obedient to their husbands as long as the men did not oppress them or order them to do things that were prohibited by God. They were pleased with the gender role assigned to them by God. Overall, all the women embraced their gender roles only because they desired to please God. Based on my observation, the majority of the women were modest, wore hijab, promoted activities that separate the sexes, such as separate services and social functions. They willingly accepted these two aspects of separation, as well as the establishing of spatial boundaries between them and unrelated men. Generally, the respondent's conclusion was that women didn't have a problem understanding this verse; they accepted it and submitted to God's injunctions. As one of the respondents stated, "women get it and men do not."

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Endnotes - Chapter Six

[1] Interview respondent.
[2] McCracken, pp. 7-8.
[3] McCracken, pp. 7-8.
[4] McCracken, pp.7-8.
[5] Giddings, pp.13, 82.
[6] Giddings, back cover.
[7] Interview respondent.
[8] Cannon, "The Emergence of a Black Feminist Consciousness", pp. 30-40. See also Collins, p. 22.
[9] Collins, p. 237.
[10] Collins, pp. 222-226.
[11] Collins, p.224.
[12] Cannon, Black Womanist Ethics, pp. 105-143. See also Collins, p. 107.
[13] Collins, p. 39.
[14] Collins, pp. 92, 93, 107, 109.
[15] Abdul Qaabadih, Ahmadu, p. 3.
[16] Dannin, pp. 33-55.
[17] Dannin, pp. 31-34.
[18] World Association of Muslim Youngmen Handbook, p. 9.
[19] Interview, Hajj Musa, disciple of Sheikh Ezaldeen.
[20] Dannin, p. 48.
[21] Dannin, p. 128.
[22] Dannin, p.128. See also interview with Hajj Musa, disciple of Sheikh Ezaldeen.
[23] Interview, Hajj Musa, disciple of Sheikh Ezaldeen.
[24] Interview, Hajj Musa, disciple of Sheikh Ezaldeen.
[25] Quba Institute School Profile.
[26] Quba Institute School Profile, Brochures, Philadelphia Black Network Vol. 2 issue 2 pp. 107-108.
[27] Interview with pioneer of *Dar-ul*-Islam, Imam Asim Abdur-Rashid, Imam (for almost twenty years) of *Masjid* Mujahideen and Ameer of *Majlis as*-Shurah of Philadelphia, a centralized consulting body of Imams with the sole purpose of uniting Muslims in Philadelphia and surrounding areas under the guidance of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Their goal is to work towards becoming one ummah. Also interview with another pioneer, Sheikh Sayed Abdul-Hadi, writer of an unpublished manuscript entitled, "A Short Overview of Islam in Philadelphia, The Last Thirty Years". Sheikh Abdul Hadi and his wife were responsible for the *da'wah* program in the prison system. They also propagated Islam throughout the Philadelphia community. A majority of the information on the *Dar-ul-Islam* movement was collected from the writings of Sheikh Hadi and from these interviews. They also provided names of the pioneer imams of the *Dar-ul-Islam*. The names are Sheikh Abdul Karim Ahmed, Sulayman Abdul Hadi, Ali Ahmed, Hasan Abdul Haqq, Zaid Abdus Sabur and Asim Abdur Rashid. Zaid Abdus Sabur was the only imam from this group that left the movement to join with the *Jama'at al-Fuqrah*. However, the majority of these pioneers are still influential figures in the Philadelphia Sunni community.
[28] Interview with Imam Asim Abdur Rashid. Contrary to the position that the *Dar* movement is defunct, Imam Asim stated the movement is still very much alive. He stated that when the *Dar* split in the early eighties, many of the former members from Philadelphia, New York, Cleveland, Detroit, Atlanta, and other major cities in Virginia and North Carolina, re-established themselves as the National *Jama'at* under the leadership of Imam Jamil al-Amin. And from that time to the present, the *Dar-ul-Islam* has been an entity of the National *Jama'at*. Although this group did not keep the name *Dar-ul-Islam*, Imam Asim stated that the principles and concept of *Dar-ul-Islam* could never die. Therefore, the *Jama'at* kept the same principles, and the concept of *bay'at* (pledge, or loyalty to the imam). As well, the*Jama'at*

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maintained the ideology that Muslims in America should strive to be as close to an Islamic state as possible. At that time, both imams, Imam Yahya (former *Dar* member who left and became a part of the *Fuqrah*) and Imam Jamil formed an alliance and made a treaty for mutual cooperation and support.

[29] Curtis, pp. 51-68.

[30] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 95.

[31] Pickthall, M. M. p. 75.

[32] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., p. 834.

[33] Al-Nawawī, Forty Hadīth, p. 73.

[34] Al-Nawawī, Forty Hadīth, p. 39.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Throughout this study, the investigation of different English translations of the meaning of Qur'ān 4:34 was to discern whether or not they conveyed the most appropriate meaning and explanation of God's word regarding the division of labor between man and woman. The focus of this work was also concerned with how these translations influenced the gender positions of African American Muslim women.

My argument was that English translations that I examined do not give the most appropriate meaning of what God is saying regarding the verse in question. Based on the analysis of these translations dating back to the very first one, almost all of them translated this verse in a way that implies that God is giving men unquestionable superiority, authority and control over women. Since this is their "degree above", then women must obey them in all that men order them to do. If women (wives) challenge what men (husbands) say and choose not to obey them, then men have the authority to apply corrective measures, the most severe of which is beating the wives in order to force them to "hear and obey."

Yet my position is that this inference is not accurate at all. To support this position, in Chapter One I employed El Tayeb's work on the principles and problems of the Qur'ān as a theoretical framework. Her work and the work of other scholars was used to validate my argument. Their work was quite helpful in proving that some of the existing English translations have serious problems, and because of this they do not render comprehensive meaning. For instance, in El Tayeb's study she showed that it is

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impossible to translate literally an original language to another language and keep the same exact style, order and arrangement of words. Therefore, translations can't fully capture the variety of meanings within the proper context of the original language. Due to the unique characteristics of classical Arabic, translations are much more difficult. Furthermore, the problems of translating Qur'ānic Arabic are magnified because the language of the Qur'ān is the standard of eloquence in the Arabic language. It is this eloquence which gives the Qur'ānic Arabic the status of inimitability (*i'jāz).* El Tayeb did outstanding research on the translation problems surrounding the unique and difficult concept of *i'jāz,* and the concept of un-translatability of the Qur'ān and it was concluded that English translations cannot stand alone without reference to the Arabic original. They need the support of *tafsīr* to help render comprehensive meaning of what God is really saying to the reader.

Throughout this study, I investigated the problems mentioned above and addressed the intentional and unintentional exegetical alteration and expansion of the meaning in the English translated text, and how these translations influenced the gender positions of African American Muslim women. In addition, I ascertained that many of the translations in this study do not have introductions of high quality, and according to El Tayeb that is a serious problem. She says:

> Since the translation is not exegesis, the proper setting for providing the target reader relevant information to guide them through the translated text is the introduction to the translation.[1]

Therefore, the ultimate goal of such an introduction is to facilitate readers understanding of the text by informing them of essential elements associated with the meaning of the Qur'ān as a whole. Moreover, I learned that the first and oldest English

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translation of the meaning of the Qur'ān, that of Ross, was translated not from Arabic, but from French to English. However, the translator was not a French scholar. He also had extremely strong anti-Islamic sentiments in his translation. It was discovered, as discussed in Chapter One, that this translation was not accurate at all. The work is considered to be faulty and of little use.[2]

Yet in regard to Qur'ān 4:34, Ross' translation is the foundation for all subsequent English translations by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. As illustrated in the examination of many of the existing translations regarding the meaning of Qur'ān 4:34, there has been little or no progress in the translation, interpretation and understanding of this verse, which is still today the most misunderstood verse in the Qur'ān.

Once I completed my research on the development of *tafsīr* and study of the proper methods of elucidating, explaining, and amplifying the meaning of the word of God in it's original language, I translated and analyzed the exegesis of Qur'ān 4:34 by some of Islam's most famous and notable *mufassirun.* It was from their exegesis that I was able to discern the most appropriate explanation of the English translation of Qur'ān verse 4:34, which I included in Chapter Four. For the most part, their commentary did bring some clarity to the English translations read by African American Muslim women.

For instance, in contrast to the English translation of the concept of *qawwāmūna*, the explanation of this term in the majority of their work is as follows: men as *qawwāmūna* are responsible for the full care of women. Because of this God has given men a "degree above" women. According to the exegesis, the degree could be responsibility, inheritance, strength, and/or *adab* (etiquette, proper order of things). The

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degree is the extra care that men give women. In this context, the degree is meant to encourage men to treat women with kindness and with deep compassion. In this sense, men should strive not to give in to perceived provocation from some women, but to maintain a generous, pleasant and enduring disposition. Hence, the degree is the man's largess and tolerance.[3]

A similar explanation surrounding the concept of the "degree above" is that God places men over women in order to motivate them to be generous and kind to their wives. Thereby, when they strive to do this, God will reward them on the Day of Judgment. And as it relates to this life, when the man is *karim* or generous to his wife, she in return offers joy and comfort to him. To support this in Qur'ān 4:19, God says to live with them according to *maruf*, meaning that which is suitable to the women's nature, and does not violate Islamic law or tradition. *Maruf* also means it is expected that men show *shahamah*, or chivalry in their treatment of women.[4] Therefore, husbands should not be miserly in extending kindness, nor should their behavior be abusive.

As implied in the proceeding chapter, kindness, generosity, and charity are the prerequisites for the "degree above" which God has provided for men over what He has provided for women. Therefore, the "degree above", as translated in some existing English translations, should not be seen by men as that of power, privilege, authority, or control. In reference to *nushūz*, the *tafsīr* was quite clear that the corrective measures are only for women who constantly and arrogantly refuse their husband. In regard to the most severe measure (hit them lightly) there is evidence throughout this work which verifies "hitting" as a corrective measure is restricted by the Prophet's tradition. The

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Prophet never hit his wives; his separation (application of step two) from them was enough to correct their behavior and resolve any marital conflicts. Although, the majority of traditions give evidence that the Prophet strongly disapproved of hitting women, he did stipulate in his farewell address that hitting (as a deterrent) should only be resorted to if the wife has become guilty in an obvious manner of immoral conduct. It should be done in such a way as not to cause pain. For example, by hitting her lightly with a *miswak*. The hitting is not a punishment; it is a reprimand, to humiliate, to correct odd behavior. Regarding the occasion of revelation of this verse, as discussed in Chapter Four, the Prophet said:

> I wanted one thing, but God has willed another thing. And what God has willed must be best.[5]

With this understanding in mind, the Prophet could never abrogate, nor did he abrogate what God has revealed regarding this verse. Therefore, no matter how we look at it, God did reveal wa-*dribhunna* "and hit them, strike them" as the last and most severe resort for correcting *nushūz*. But we need to be mindful of the fact that the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* go hand in hand; both are primary sources of Islamic family law. Therefore, we cannot deny that it is the Qur'ān which gives injunctions, but it is the *Sunnah* which demonstrates how to implement those injunctions. For example, it is the Qur'ān which tells us who to worship, but the *Sunnah* tells us how to worship. Another example is that the Qur'ān tells us to pray but it is the *Sunnah* that demonstrates the proper way to pray. The same concept applies to ablution. There are numerous illustrations of this throughout the Qur'ān. This is why exegesis is so significant, because it gives commentary on how the Prophet implemented what God says in the Qur'ān. Based on this evidence, the women of this study accepted what God said in the

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Qur'ān, and implemented it by following the *Sunnah*. This is how they made sense of Qur'ān verse 4:34. To substantiate this the following respondent said:

> In the Qur'ān, Allah gives us certain injunctions for correct conduct in all areas of human life. But it is the Prophet Muhammad's, (SAAS), *Sunnah* that shows us how to apply those injunctions. In the Qur'ān it says *tayammun*, [ablution with dirt if water is not available] yet, it doesn't say how to make *tayammun*. But you must go back to the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) for his teachings for all that and Muslims follow the *Sunnah* even though the Qur'ān says do this or that. Why not with this verse? Why do we just refer to the Qur'ān regarding this verse and not the *Sunnah* of the Prophet? So let's take it to the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), the same way we take everything back to the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). In order for us to understand the things that were revealed in Qur'ān and why they were revealed we must go back to the Prophet. Okay, it said strike, okay, where? We know that a male and a male are not supposed to strike each other in the face, so how can you be a male striking a female in the face? Between the male and the male, it says, 'if you strike, don't shed blood, unless **blood was shed first**. How can it be a male striking a female and shedding her blood? Between the male and the male, it says don't **bruise**! How can it be a male, hitting a female and bruising her? So, if I'm striking, and I can't do any of that, then what am I striking with? Where am I striking? It says take her back, to her gentle side. As when she was a little child. And pop her on the back of her hand. So, and then if you're really deep – delve into it even deeper, you know, it says that when you strike a female, you strike her with something as light as a feather. So, don't just take it for the word, that's saying hit, and run with it, when, when, he says make *wudhu* [ablution] you just don't take it for the word, and run with it. Okay? Don't let it be what it is that you want it to be, and run with it. Dig deep, you know and find out the real meaning about it, and run with it. You know, and practice it. You know, because throughout the history of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), you know, nobody can ever say that he struck his wives. All right?

Another respondent stated:

> Allah is not an oppressive God. "Allah says He does not oppress Himself nor does He oppress His creation." When I read the Qur'ān, I know it is all positive. I read it positively yet there are those who read it negatively. I don't read the Qur'ān looking for the negative. I know it is all positive.

Moreover, exegesis of the last line of this verse supports the thoughts and opinions of the respondents mentioned above. God in His infinite wisdom and mercy

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says:

> If the women return to their natural behavior do not remind them of their past behavior, forget and forgive them and treat them with kindness because you are in the presence of your Lord who watches over you.[6]

With this evidence I analyzed the results of the interviews and I concluded that whenever the respondent used exegesis, they were able to make sense of the meaning of Qur'ān 4:34. Their understanding is compatible with what I established as the most appropriate translation of this verse. Subsequently, as documented in the responses in the final chapter, these women used the proper meaning of this verse to negotiate their God-given rights in both their private and public space. As illustrated in the same chapter, the respondents critically examined exegesis to make sure that their maximum rights were not limited by the English translation. As for the men who participated in the interviews and understood this verse, they also depended on exegesis for clarity of the translated verse. As a result, they treated their wives with kindness. Again this verifies the significance of exegesis as emphasized throughout this study. In this sense, the exegesis of Qur'an 4:34 positively impacts on the gendered position of African American Muslim women.

In contrast to the discussion above, I also deduced from the field research, that this verse was grossly misunderstood by those who did not use sources like *tafsīr* and *fiqh* to help them understand Qur'ān 4:34. From the responses that I documented, some of the women were abused by their husbands because of the latter's misapplication of this verse. According to their responses, the most misunderstood terms are obedience and disobedience. For some men obedience means that women must "hear and obey them", and if women challenge that on any level, then they are disobedient to God and

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to them. The respondents told me that some men believe that a disobedient wife is one who did not prepare dinner on time, or is late coming in from work, or visited her non-Muslim family member without the husband's approval. Yet all of the women simply disagree with these sentiments. One respondent clearly stated:

> I don't think not preparing dinner and...being late... are acts of *nushūz.* These things are circumstances... turn of events that happen in a course of a day that you have limited control over. This is not disobedience; the husband should be patient.

According to this woman's position, this would be a hardship on women. Although she can accept sacrifices and handle hardships, men should not put her in that position. Men should not impose any unnecessary hardships on their wives. Furthermore, according to Maududi's exegesis on this verse:

> Obedience to Allah is of far greater importance than obedience to the husband and has precedence over it. Therefore, it is the duty of the wife to refuse to obey her husband, if and when he orders her to do a thing that is against the commandment of Allah. In that case it shall be a sin to obey him.[7]

Unfortunately, there were some women who responded that even though they were believing women, they still were abused. One respondent painfully recounted:

> It is unbelievable when I think back on the women who never committed *nushūz.* They were not disobedient to Allah. They prayed and wore *hijab* and were modest. They were raising believing children. They hid their husband's faults even when the men were oppressive. Through all this, they did not refuse their husband's conjugal rights. And in spite of everything they struggled, tried to hear and obey. If they challenge their husband's understanding of things or asked for basic maintenance that was due to them, they were hit. This is the problem.

This respondent and others described the gross misunderstanding of *nushūz* as the cause of tension and confusion in their homes. As one woman put it, "I think women

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get it, yet this verse is **bait** for men. Men want to make it something else. Something different than what Allah intended it to be. It was never intended to oppress women."

All the women voiced that when it does oppress women, it negatively impacts on the gender position of the Muslim woman. It breaks her heart and her spirit. When this happens to a Muslim woman, the spirit of the family eventually deteriorates. They believe the Muslim woman is central to the family because, she is the heart, while the man is the head. If her spirit and heart is broken there is no balance, no compassion, no kindness, no love, and no sacrifice. There is no helpmate to assist and comfort the head in his noble status as *qawwām.* As a consequence, the family will disintegrate, and so will the Muslim community.

Despite all this, the majority of the women who gained meaningful explanations using exegesis were able to negotiate their rights and did not tolerate abuse from their husbands. They actually felt empowered. As stated throughout the preceding chapter, African American women are able to make sense of Qur'an 4:34 and encourage others to continue to read and utilize exegesis. To them, exegesis brings clarity and meaning to the translated text.

With these final remarks in conjunction with the many perceptions of the African American women in this study, I can conclude that African American women have made sense of this verse, and their understanding is compatible with classical *tafsīr* of Qur'ān 4:34 and with the most appropriate translation of the verse as quoted in Chapter Four. Consequently, African American Muslim women are well aware of the benefits of understanding and applying this verse based on exegesis. They realize that it benefits not just the gendered position of women, but also the gender position of men in

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real life situations. They are also aware (some painfully) of the detriments and consequences that result from the gross misunderstanding and the misapplication of this verse when readers only depend on English translations.

Nevertheless, this study is far from being conclusive concerning the controversy Qur'ān 4:34. However, for the purpose of my work I hold that my arguments, and the evidence to support them are sound. My argument is credible – it is *tafsīr* that helps the African American Muslim woman make sense of the English translation of Qur'ān verse 4:34. It brings the vital context of translated verses and enables the reader to understand the intended meanings of God's revelations.

Hopefully, this work will inform readers with some of the basic problems associated with translating the Qur'ān. Moreover, it will serve as a tool to facilitate the reader through the reading process, and encourage the use of *tafsīr* to aid in their understanding of the meaning of God's word in the Qur'ān.

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Endnotes - Conclusion

[1] El Tayeb, p.253.
[2] Blankinship, "Murshid", pp. 15-16.
[3] al Disūqī, pp. 37-43.
[4] al Disūqī, p. 43.
[5] Qurtubi, Vol. 5, p. 168.
[6] Yusuf Ali, Madinah ed., pp. 219-220, n. 547.
[7] Maududi, pp.121-124. M. Ali, pp.199, n. 569.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

FUTURE RESEARCH

As we have embarked on the beginning of a new millennium, indigenous and immigrant Muslims are faced with a serious dilemma. There are more and more Muslims today living in the United States who are striving to live by Muslim family law. Yet the Muslim community does not have institutions or infrastructure in place to apply, enforce, or even adequately explain Islamic family law to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This means, in cases of child custody, burial rights, marriages, marital disputes, inheritance, and interest, Muslims are increasingly forced to turn to the existing civil and legal system for redress. This system is not equipped to handle it, nor do they recognize the legality of Muslim family law.

These issues concerning personal law fall under the purview of the Islamic family court, which is non-existent. Therefore, there should be a comprehensive qualitative study to investigate what the scholars and leaders of the Muslim *ummah* can do to establish an infrastructure and institutions within the Muslim *ummah* in the United States. The study could also investigate any possibility of working collaboratively within the existing system in order to develop more sensitivity to Muslim concerns. This would help Muslims adhere to Qur'anic injunctions and Islamic family law without conflict, while living in 21st century America.

It would be interesting to see how our legal system would respond to such a collaboration. Historically, precedents have been set by other religious communities coexisting with systems that are fundamentally different regarding their legal and religious law. This investigation could also determine what is interfering with the

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Muslim community establishing such a symbiotic relationship, and to that end make recommendations that will address these concerns.

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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN PHILADELPHIA AND THE DELAWARE VALLEY

The total Philadelphia and surrounding area Muslim family population numbers more than 150,000 persons. There are over 35 masjids in Philadelphia and its surrounding counties.

These numbers reflect the exponential growth resulting from indigenous converts, birth rates, immigrants and visiting students. The Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Daily News, Philadelphia Tribune and Philadelphia New Observer, have reported that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the city of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.[1]

According to data derived from the local communities, the composition of the community is as follows:

Number of Households	30,000
Number of Households with Children	25,000
Average Family Size Per Household With Children	6 Persons
Total Population	150,000+

Gender Distribution %	
Male	44%
Female	56%

Age Distribution	
Under 12 Years	25%
13 – 17 Years	14%
18 – 24 Years	20%
25 – 32 Years	15%
33 – 44 Years	15%
Over 45 Years	11%

Average Income Per Household	$35,000
Total House Income	$1,050 Million

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Endnotes - Appendix A

[1] Tijarat Associates, Inc., Business and Financial Consulting. p, 8.

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APPENDIX B: TAFSĪR OF QUR'ĀN VERSE 4:34 (QADYANI AHMADI)

The Noor Foundation International, Inc., publisher of the Holy Qur'ān, translated by Amatul Rahman and Abdul Mannan Omar was kind enough to send me the following unpublished *tafsīr* of Qur'ān 4:34. The *tafsīr is by* Allamah Nooruddin and rendered into English by the Omars. This contact was made after the writing of my dissertation therefore, I have included their work as an appendix.[1]

ٱلرِّجَالُ قَوَّٰمُونَ عَلَى ٱلنِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ ٱللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ
وَبِمَآ أَنفَقُوا۟ مِنْ أَمْوَٰلِهِمْ ۚ فَٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتُ قَٰنِتَٰتٌ حَٰفِظَٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا
حَفِظَ ٱللَّهُ ۚ وَٱلَّٰتِى تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَٱهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِى
ٱلْمَضَاجِعِ وَٱضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۖ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا۟ عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ
ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

Men are the full maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them excel the other, and because men spend their wealth on them. So virtuous women are those who are obedient (to Allah) and guard (their own chastity as well as the rights and secrets of their husbands even) in (their) absence, as Allah has guarded (the women's rights). As for those women (on whose part) you apprehend disobedience and bad behavior, you may admonish them (first lovingly) and (then) refuse to share their beds with them and (as a last resort) punish them (mildly). If they, then, obey you, you shall seek no other way against them. Indeed, Allah alone is High, (and) Great. (4:34)

The word use in the Qur'ān is *Qawwāmūna. Qawwām* means: One who manages affairs well; One who stands firm in another's business, protects his/her interest and looks after his/her affairs: A maintainer (Lisan; Taj) Thus it combines the concept of physical maintenance as well as of moral and financial responsibility. The word *Qawwām* is an intensive form of *Qaim* and thus more comprehensive. Therefore which we have adopted the word full maintainer. The verse describes the responsibilities of men in family, as embodied in the word *Qawwām.*

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The verse contains two reasons why man has been made the head of the family:

1. His better natural physical power / strength.
2. His being bread winner and maintainer of the family.

It is but natural and fair that he who earns and supplies the money should have the final say.

The verse also provides us with the guidelines in case of very serious family disputes. Three steps are mentioned which can be taken in this order:

1. Verbal advice and admonition.
2. Temporary suspension of conjugal relations.
3. Some other kind of mild punishment.

Regarding this last remedy the Holy Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said that if at all a Muslim has to punish his wife the punishment should not be such as to leave any mark on her body or to cause pain (Tirmiḍhi).

The Holy Prophet (pbuh), Could any of you beat his wife as he would beat a slave and then lie with her in the evening. (Bukhari) Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) says the extreme punishment may be with a toothbrush or something lighter than this (Bahr). Therefore this resort of punishment must be very light and should be only symbolic. It must also be borne in mind that it is a mere permission and though allowed, it was discouraged in practice.

According to Imam Shafī it is preferable not to resort to punishment of the wife (Razi). The Holy Prophet said, you will not find these men as the best among you who punish their wives (Dawud, 12:42).

The measures mentioned in the verse are not to remain in effect for an indefinite period, for wives are not to be left 'like a thing suspended' (c.f. 4:129)

Four months, according to the Holy Qur'ān, is the utmost limit for abstention from conjugal relations.

In such cases if all this fails a family council is recommended. The next verse outlines an excellent plan for settling family disputes without too much publicity or mud slinging in public, or having to resort to the cold chicaneries of the law courts.

The arbiters from each family would know the idiosyncrasies of both parties and they are expected to be acquainted with the real cause of differences, and it is easier also for both parties cases before them and this arbiters would be able to affect a real reconciliation. If all hopes of reconciliation fail a divorce or Khula is allowed as a last resort.

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Nushuz means: Disobedience; Rebellion; Ill will Deliberated bad behavior; Desertion; Rising against someone; Resisting and hating (Taj; Qamus)

Abu Hayyan explains it as leaving the husband's place and taking up an abode, which he does not like (Bahr). It also include what is now always described as 'mental cruelty', torture and persistent breach of her marital obligations and rising against her husband, resisting him and hating him and using against her husband.

The desires and conduct of the two sexes are not similar but are complementary and reciprocal. Will it be possible for the preacher of the equality of men and women to remove these differences between man and woman which are rooted in their innermost beings and genes?

The Divine attributes of Allah the most High and Great mentioned at the end of the verse under commentary are likewise intended to warn men that the punishment of women if at all resorted to should not be unjust or vindictive or high handed. If they are high and great, above the mind, that there is One Who is High and Great above all and He shall call man to account for any improper use of power.

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Endnotes - Appendix B

[1] Nooruddin, 'Allamah. The Holy Qur'an: Unpublished Tafsīr. Translated By Omar, Amatul Rahman and Abdul Mannan, Omar.

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APPENDIX C: TAFSĪR OF QUR'ĀN VERSE 4:34 (SUNNI)

This tafsīr is by Sheikh Sayed Abdul-Hadi, writer of the unpublished manuscript titled, "A Short Overview of Islam in Philadelphia: The Last Thirty Years". Like the text in Appendix B, this tafsīr is also unpublished and was given to me at the end of my writing. [1]

In the Name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful

And it comes in the auspicious book.'

> Men are the maintainers and protectors of women because Allah as given the one more strength than the other and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in the absence of their husband what it is that Allah would have them guard. As for those women on whose part you fear disloyalty or ill-conduct, admonish them first, next refuse to share their bed, and last beat them lightly. But if they return to obedience then seek not against them means of annoyance. For Allah is Most High Great above you all. (4:34)

These words have also been rendered 'admonish them, banish them to beds apart and scourge them.' Also 'admonish them (then if they persist), forsake them in bed; and finally strike them.' What we are concerned with in the verse is the Arabic word being translated as 'beat, strike, or scourge. Be advised that the Arabic word (dharaba) does mean to beat, to strike or to hit, but it does not imply to clobber or beat-up for the Prophet (SAS) forbid Muslims to beat up on one another. Indeed at least one scholar, Imam Shafi, considers this 'beating' inadvisable, though permissible and all authorities are unanimous in deprecating any kind of cruelty, inclusive of mental cruelty. For the Messenger of Allah has said, "to treat women kindly for they are with you as helpmates who can do nothing on their own. Remembering that you have possession of them only as a trust from Allah and have the freedom of their pudenda only because of certain words of Allah." And he forbids Muslims to strike in the face with the palm of the hand. And it was during the rein of Umar that he recommended this beating be done with a tooth stick. Usually, a moderate length of olive branch.

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There is a tradition that states that once when the Prophet (SAS) had separated himself from his wives, Abu Bakr came to see him and having heard about the conduct of his daughter Aisha, went to her and STRUCK her on the thigh saying, You must not vex the Messenger of Allah.' This shows two things of interest. First, the Prophet (SAS) was separated from his wives and second that the woman deemed as displaying ill-conduct was hit, e.g. beaten by her father. 'Men are the maintainers and protectors of women.

But the point of 'beat them lightly' is taken to mean to humiliate. In the same way that an adult admonishes a child by beating them as a means of instructing them in relation to what it is that caused the beating i.e. gross disobedience, defiance etc, so it is when a grown-up woman or at least a mature woman who rebels against marital authority is 'beaten' as Allah instructs is humiliated and hopefully receives the correction in the spirit of submission to Allah. After all Allah says that you can only admonish those who believe in the Allah and the last day.

Of course all such matters that are to be implemented when circumstances call for them depends upon the faith of the practitioner. The Messenger of Allah never struck any of his wives, though they were told that they were not like any of the other woman. There may be many different opinions concerning this matter, but the fact is that Allah has commanded what He has commanded and He knows best concerning his creatures.

Insha'Allah, the scrutinizing reader will go even further to gain certainty as the Prophet (SAS) has said 'seeking of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim, male and female.

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Endnotes –Appendix C

[1] Sheikh Sayed Abdul-Hadi, writer of an unpublished manuscript entitled, "A Short Overview of Islam in Philadelphia, The Last Thirty Years".

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APPENDIX D: UMM ZARA

This *ḥadīth*, entitled *the Ḥadīth of Umm Zara*, was discovered toward the end of my research and writing. It is relevant to my work, because it sums up all that has been said on the results of the interviews. I will quote the *ḥadīth* first and then finish with commentary surrounding the gender mutual language found in the Qur'ān deduced from this *ḥadīth*. This *ḥadīth* speaks about eleven women. Six praise their husbands while five condemn them.

> (5998) Aisha reported that one day there sat together eleven women making an explicit promise amongst themselves that they would conceal nothing about their spouses.
>
> The first one said: my husband is a sort of the meat of a lean camel, placed at the top of a hill, which it is difficult to climb up, nor the meat is good enough that one finds in oneself the urge to take it away from the top of that mountain (2735).
>
> The second one said: my husband is so bad that I am afraid I would not be able to describe his faults – both visible and invisible – completely (2736).

The first two women condemn their husbands because they are unreachable. They do not show any affection to their wives. Both the husbands have bad faults and they are disrespectful to their wives.

> The third one said: my husband is a long-statured fellow (i.e. he lacks intelligence). If I give vent to my feelings about him, he would divorce me, and if I keep quiet I would be made to live in a state of suspense (neither completely abandoned by him nor entertained as wife).

The third wife also condemned her husband because he keeps her in suspense. He alienates his wife and does not show any emotions towards her.

> The fourth one said: my husband is like the night of Tihama (the night of Hijaz and Mecca), neither too cold nor hot, neither there is any fear of him nor grief.

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The fourth wife praises her husband. He is kind and loving towards her. They have a balanced and harmonious relationship. She does not fear her husband and she can communicate with him at any time. There are no secrets between them. The husband listens attentively to his wife so that he may learn her nature.

> The fifth one said: my husband is (like) a leopard as he enters the house, and behaves like a lion when he gets out, and he does not ask about that which he leaves in the house [2737].

The fifth one also praises her husband. She says that he is courageous and is able to confront the world. Yet at home, he is playful and kind towards her. He is a *qawwām* because he demonstrates the degree of kindness towards her.

> The sixth one said: so far as my husband is concerned, he eats so much that nothing is left back and when he drinks he drinks that no drop is left behind. And when he lies down he wraps his body and does not touch me so that he may know my grief [2738].

The sixth wife condemns her husband because he does not comfort her. Although she grants him his conjugal rights, he is not tender nor concerned with her. He is sexual but not intimate. Her husband also has extremely bad habits.

> The seventh one said: my husband is heavy in spirit, having no brightness in him, impotent, suffering from all kinds of conceivable diseases, having such rough manners that he may break my head or wound my body, or may do both.

The seventh one also condemned her husband because he has so many inadequacies. He is ignorant and impatient. She feels that she is in a hopeless situation.

> The eighth one said: my husband is as sweet as the sweet-smelling plant, and as soft as the softness of the hare [2739].

The eighth wife praises her husband. She says he is sweet and clean in his smell. The softness of his heart emanates in his outer behavior.

> The ninth one said: my husband is the master of a lofty building, long-statured, having heaps of ashes (at his door) [2740] and his house is near the meeting place and the inn [2741].

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The ninth woman praises her husband because he has noble character. He is hospitable and generous to others. He also humors her.

> The tenth one said: my husband is Malik, and how fine Malik is, much above appreciation and praise of mine. He has many folds of his camel, more in number than the pastures for them [(2742)]. When they (the camels) hear the sound of music, they become sure that they are going to be slaughtered [(2743)].

The tenth wife praises her husband because he is *karim*, the generous one. He is good to his wife and to others and she likes the generosity that he shows to others.

> The eleventh one said: my husband is Abu Zara. How fine Abu Zara is! He has suspended in my ears heavy ornaments and fed me liberally that my sinews and bones are covered with fat. So he made me happy. He found me among the shepherds living in the side of the mountain [(2744)], and he made me the owner of the horses, camels and lands and heaps of grain and he finds no fault with me. I sleep and get up in the morning (at my own sweet will) and drink to my heart's content. ...One day Abu Zara went out (of his house) when the milk was churned in the vessels, that he met a woman, having two children like leopards playing with her pomegranates (chest) under her vest. He divorced me (Umm Zara) and married that woman (whom Abu Zara) met on the way. I (Umm Zara) later on married another person, a chief, who was an expert rider, and a fine archer: he bestowed upon my many gifts and gave me one pair of every kind of animal and said: Umm Zara, make use of everything (you need) and send forth to your parents (but the fact) is that even if I combine all the gifts that he bestowed upon me, they stand no comparison to the least gift of Abu Zara.

Out of all the women, Umm Zara has the highest praise for Abu Zara. He is the one who is best to his wife. He is truly a *qawwām*.

> Aisha reported that Allah's Messenger (saw) said to me: I am for you as Abu Zara was for Umm Zara. [1] /[1]

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[1] 2735. What this means is that the husband has no quality which can attract anyone, but in spite of this he is haughty and one finds it difficult for oneself to reconcile with him. The idea of meat being placed at the top of the hill implies his haughtiness, his stubborn and uncompromising attitude towards his wife.

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This *ḥadīth* is relevant to my work because the *mufassirun* used this *ḥadīth* as a paradigm to discern gender related language from the Qur'an and authentic *ḥadīth* of the Prophet. Shaykh Abdullah Adhami is the translator and interpreter of the classical *tafsīr* on this particular *ḥadīth*, and it is his work that I use as a framework to substantiate and explain the research I have completed surrounding Qur'an 4:34.[2]

Based on Adhami's translation on the *tafsīr* of this *ḥadīth*, the *mufassirun* have concluded that in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, the language used to describe husband and

---

2736. It can also be translated in this way: I am afraid, if I describe his faults, I shall have to abandon him, i.e. he would divorce me being annoyed at my impertinence.

2737. He enjoys sound sleep like a leopard and remains indifferent to the affairs of his wife and family.

2738. The man concerned is interested like animals only in eating and drinking and is not interested in the welfare of his wife and children.

2739. He possesses fine qualities both of body and mind.

2740. He is very warm and hospitable and the fire always burns in his kitchen.

2741. He is also the chief and is always busy in entertaining guests.

2742. Camels are always slaughtered in his guest house, and, therefore, he does not require as many pastures to graze his camels as the folds to keep them.

2743. In old Arab society there could have been no idea of feast without dance and music, so when the camels heard the music they came to know of the feast being held and were thus sure that they would be slaughtered and their meat would be served to the guests.

2744. "I was an insignificant woman, without any means."

2745. He is very delicate and smart and is moderate in eating and drinking.

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wife and family relations centers around gender mutuality, compatibility, respect, love, comfort and void of conflict, arrogance, or hatred.

For example, the words *zawj, ba'l, ilf* are gender mutual Arabic words for both husband and wife. *Zawj* means my other half, and is a single unit of the pair. Yet, each of them is independent because, initially they were whole to begin with. Based on Adhami's work, the word *zawj* implies that when two halves come together as one they unite as a spiritual unit. The word *ba'l* by itself means husband, lord, or master, and is widespread in Semitic languages. The only use of it for a woman is as mother, because the mother is a master of her children. However, primarily *ba'l* means husband. Regarding the husband, *ba'l* specifically means if he is provoked, he will not retaliate. The husband must refuse to be provoked. However there is a derivative verb *bā'ala, yubā'ila* which has a meaning of play between husband and wife which is derived from it's primary meaning of sexual intercourse. Therefore, this implies that the spouses play with each other and the husband literally mixes his juices with his wife.

The other gender mutual word, *ilf*, literally means a source of joy. *Ilf* is derived from the word *talif*, which means to come down from a journey for rest. The implication is that a man comes to his wife for rest and comfort. It is amazing that just in Arabic terms to describe spouses in God's divine language denotes love, tranquility, peace, harmony, and joy between the couple. According to Adhami, God's divine language shapes the discipline and *adab* (etiquette and order) of both partners within a marriage, in order to understand what they are supposed to do with each other. This is confirmed with the divine language used in Qur'an 4:34, and with the language employed by the

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women who praised their husbands in this *ḥadīth.* All of the words adapted in this *ḥadīth* and Qur'ān 4:34 are gender complimentary. The attributes of the word *qawwām* is complimentary with the attributes of *qānitāt.* Neither of the attributes of these terms are contradictory or conflicting to each other.[3]

The language applied in the Qur'an verse 4:34, and the language of those women who praised their husbands, depict the highest Islamic ideals and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet's marital life. In reference to the men who were praised by their wives, this is due to their generosity and kindness to them. According to Adhami, generosity (*karam*) is the degree that men have over their wives as mentioned in Qur'an 2:229 and in 4:34. Based on divine language, the man is *karim* and not the woman, for the husband as *qawwām* is generous to his wife, and the wife in return offers joy and comfort to her *karim*, the generous one. Adhami also comments, based of his analysis on the gender language of this *ḥadīth,* that God places men over women in order to motivate them to be generous and kind to their wives. They have the ability to be kind, and will be rewarded for this on the Day of Judgment.

Adhami also states that ideally, women do not need to be motivated or to be reminded. They do not need this degree from Allah because their qualities of caring, compassion, and kindness are all inherent. A wife surrenders her heart and soul in all her endeavors. Subsequently, when the man understands that his role or status of *qawwām* requires him to be responsible, it is manifested in, his constant giving of charity, love, and kindness to his wife and family. God's gift ("the degree") to men is His mercy in enabling them to prevail in their status of *karim* and *qawwāmūna.*

With this understanding, men will be able to consider the qualities that God

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endowed women with. According to this commentary, the woman is the "spiritual anchor" of her husband and the community. In Qur'anic language, Allah made the woman a gift to her husband because she is granted the ability to be a "spiritual anchor", beginning with her husband. The implication of the concept "spiritual anchor" is that the female is willing to make great sacrifices for her family's well being. She uses her caring and nurturing nature (which includes her strength, patience and courage) to demonstrate how much she cares for her family. Similarly, the role that God allots to the *qānitāh* or righteous wife in Qur'an 4:34 is that of a "spiritual anchor". In that, capacity, she is the preserver of the unseen (due to her insight and intuition). She is the preserver of the sanctity of the home, and the preserver of the trust. The woman is the one who is trusted with the secrets (*al-ghayb*) and as indicated in Qur'an verse 4:34 and the privacy of her husband. To this extent, she is also the spiritual and emotional anchor in society because she carries, nurtures, educates and raises believing children, while she maintains a morally viable and stable Muslim family (which is the cornerstone of the Muslim community in its entirety).

She provides complete devotion and sacrifice according to her principles and she functions on them. It is the man, the *qawwām*, who enables her to be balanced and to maintain her status as *qānitāh*. In addition, based on the commentary surrounding this *ḥadīth*, the husband can learn from his wife's strength as a "spiritual anchor". He can learn how to be humble, to cry, to express emotion, to be positively compassionate, and to apply the degree of *karim* that Allah in His mercy has bestowed on him.[4]

However, when the man believes that his degree is that of power, privilege, authority, and control, and uses his "degree above" to alienate and abuse his positive

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and obedient wife, then he detracts from her positivity, and ultimately harms her soul. Consequently, he will be the first to suffer, and then the children and finally the community. According to Adhami, generally speaking, women throughout history, time, and across all cultures, are not given their due respect. They are not recognized for their dignity, sacrifices and strengths. Women are not given acknowledgment for their efforts, and they desire it, for it facilitates their self-worth and self-esteem. Even in Qur'an 4:34, God tells men to take care of women, because He made women especially to be the "spiritual anchor" of their home. Yet, it is difficult for men to give women credit. Some men feel it will reduce their status as *qiyyam* (maintainer). Furthermore, they know that when women are aware of their secrets, they are also aware of their vulnerabilities. Men do not give women acknowledgement, because to do so would also admit to their vulnerabilities. Because of their egos, this is hard for men to do, so they repress women.[5]

Actually, in many cases, men do not trust women. Perhaps this lack of trust, and the false incompatibility between men and women stems from the legacy of Eve. The legacy of Eve tells us that God created her from the rib of Adam, and some scholars are of the opinion that this denotes a lowly status for women. Additionally, it tells us that Eve is responsible for the fall of Adam. In every culture there is some type of notion or false legacy about the "wickedness" of women. However, a poem about Eve, written by a contemporary woman drastically rejects this notion. It is entitled, "The Aspects of Eve".

To have been one of many ribs
And to be
Chosen
To grow into something

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Quite different
Knocking finally as bones
Knock
On the closed gates of
The Garden
Which unexpectedly
OPENS [6]

Since this work is about African American women, I think it is relevant to share a piece of folklore that is prevalent in the African American community about the lowly status of women. The folklore is entitled *Woman and Man Started Even*, which is an African American pour quoi (why) tale with the rare outcome of the woman having more power over men. It is a moral tale that tells us in the beginning, God created man and woman as equals and treats them equally. And it says in the tale:

God created woman and man even. When woman and man talked together, they said the same number of words. When they fought, they also came out even. Woman was as strong as man, don't you know. She couldn't win over him, and he couldn't beat her. That was the way it was, just level.

As the story continues it tells us that man became weary having a woman around that he could not beat. So he went to heaven to ask God for more strength to win over woman. And he says: " If you make me harder and tougher, I will keep everything in place on Earth, including that woman. She thinks she's so smart and so mighty." And of course God gave man more strength. The man returns to the woman with more strength and tells her how he is the best now, "I am a (degree) over you with more strength than you will ever have."

Woman was upset and went to God to ask for more strength. But God told her no, because man came and asked first so she just has to get along with man being the

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strongest. Now she is angry with God, so the Satan takes this opportunity to tell her how to outwit her husband. He told her to ask God for the keys hanging by the left pearly gate. "Bring them to me, and I'll let you know what comes next."

So woman asks God for the keys and he gives them to her. When she returns home the Satan tells her, "Those are some power keys you got there," he tells woman. "Take them home and lock the door to the kitchen. Lock the door to the bedroom. Lock the children's room, too. Because, says the devil, first lockup, man always got his stomach on his mind. Always wanting to eat up everything. Second lockup, man has to have his sleep and gets upset when he don't have it. Third lockup, man can't stand to be separated from his baby children. He has care about his name going on through the next generation."

Man sees that the doors are locked up tight when they are supposed to be open wide. He storms up and tries to get through. It takes all his strength, but he can't open those doors. The story continues to tell that man could not sway woman. She only open the doors when man did what she wanted. Woman kept her keys and she wouldn't trade them for man's strength. So that is the way it is, man is strong, but it is the woman who has the power.[7]

The subtle meaning of course is that woman is not to be trusted, since all her power came from the help of Satan. Only with his help can woman ever be more powerful than man.

Subsequently, these types of tales and traditions have been passed from generation to generation, and have impacted on the gendered relationship between man and woman. As a result, man does not trust woman, so he always suppresses her. This

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may be the reason why some women become disobedient (*nashizat)* as indicated in Qur'ān 4:34 and neglect to recognize their true nature. When this happens the woman becomes a tyrant. She alienates her husband, and refuses his bed, although he is kind to her. The wife is not grateful, nor does she recognize that she is entrusted to her husband. She forgets that it is God himself who created man to be the vehicle by which God provides for her.

In conclusion, it is important that both Muslim men and women believe without any doubt that it is God Himself that has eradicated these false notions and traditions that have deprived us of our humanity. It is in the sacred text that He communicates the highest Islamic ideals and principles of justice and equity based in gender mutuality between man and woman (husband and wife). According to Adhami, Muslim men and women must reclaim their noble status as *qawwām* and *qānitāt* and recognize that Allah has endowed them with mutual and compatible attributes which allow both men and women, husbands and wives to be humble, compassionate, generous, respectful, and caring for each other. In the home, the highest Islamic ideal is to surrender to Allah first, then to surrender your heart to your spouse. For marriage is the mutual surrender of the hearts, and the mutual surrender of one's weakness and strengths. It is the entrusting of each one's soul to the another.[8]

Subsequently, it is the injunctions in Qur'ān 4:34 which lay out the proper *adab* (order, etiquette) of the family structure which allows the most appropriate environment for the surrendering of the hearts. When men and women sincerely understand the beauty and the essence of God's commands in verse 4:34, as well as God's wisdom in accordance with the reason He allocated the roles in such a manner, then neither man

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nor woman should have a problem in accepting and sustaining out those roles and responsibilities.

If men recognize why God gave them the degree above, they should be kind and generous, and provide an environment that will nurture their wives and children. Also, this atmosphere should produce love, harmony, respect, discipline, order, and peace for them and the society as well. Moreover, if women understand and accept their true nature, there should be no problem with their submission. A woman should be willing to commit to God first, then to her husband, happily sustaining her role as the "spiritual anchor". However, as expressed in the commentary on this *ḥadīth*, when men are in a state of chaos, they default out, because they force women to become chaotic. The result is the disintegration of the family, and the whole society suffers. In order to avert this possibility, God, in His infinite wisdom, has given corrective measures as defined in Qur'ān 4:128 and 4:34, for both men and women who display unnatural behavior. With this assessment of the circumstances, the commentary on the *ḥadīth* Umm Zara sums up and validates all that has been said in the interviews of the African American Muslim women.

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Endnotes –Appendix D

[1] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Siddiqi trans., Vol. IV, pp. 1302-1304. Also see Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. tr. by Khan, Vol. VII, pp. 82-86. This ḥadīth is muttafaq 'alayhi, it's the highest degree ṣaḥīḥ.
[2] Sheikh Abdullah Adhami. 2001. Ihya Productions. Lecture on audiocassette entitled Gender Relations: Issues Facing Men and Women. Sheikh Adhami is a translator and interpreter of classical Islamic text.
[3] Adhami.
[4] Adhami.
[5] Adhami.
[6] Pastan, Linda, Aspects of Eve : poems New York : Liveright, 1975 1st ed. Also see Hadith al'Bukhari, Sahih, Vol. 9, page. 346, Hatith 548; Vol. 7, page. 81, Hadith 114; Muslim, Sahih, Vol. 2, pp. 752-753, Hadiths 3466-3468, including note 1927.
[7] Hamilton, Virginia, pp. 69-74
[8] Adhami.

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